African Bird Club

Bulletin of the African Bird Club Vol 11 No 2 August 2004

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African Bird Club

The African Bird Club aims to:

- provide a worldwide focus for African ornithology
- encourage an interest in the conservation of the birds of the region
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies
- publish a twice-yearly colour bulletin
- encourage observers to visit lesser known areas of the region
- encourage observers to actively search for globally threatened and near-threatened species
- run the ABC Conservation Programme

Registered Charity No 1053920

ABC particularly wishes to thank its Corporate Sponsors for their invaluable financial support in 2004: Avifauna, Birding Africa, Birdquest, Safariwise Namibia, Sunbird, WildSounds, Wildwings and Zeiss.

ABC Membership

Membership is open to all. Annual subscription rates are:

Individual	Europe & Africa: UK£18	Rest of the World: UK£20
Family	Europe & Africa: UK£21	Rest of the World: UK£23
Student	Europe & Africa: UK£10	Rest of the World: UK£12
Supporting	UK£30 minimum	
Life	UK£350	

To join or for further details please visit the ABC web site (where there are secure on-line payment facilities) or write to the Membership Secretary—see contact information below.

ABC Website

http://www.africanbirdclub.org

Contact ABC

African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.
E-mail: info@africanbirdclub.org • website: http://www.africanbirdclub.org

Further information can be obtained directly from individual Council members by writing to them at the Club's postal address, or by e-mail as follows:

Chairman	Phil Atkinson	chairman@africanbirdclub.org
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Information Officer	Keith Betton	info@africanbirdclub.org
Membership Secretary	Bill Quantrill	membership@africanbirdclub.org
Sales Officer	Moira Hargreaves	sales@africanbirdclub.org

The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the *Bulletin of the ABC* and to any other publication.

Brief notes for contributors appear elsewhere in this Bulletin and further details are available from the Editor (editor@africanbirdclub.org).

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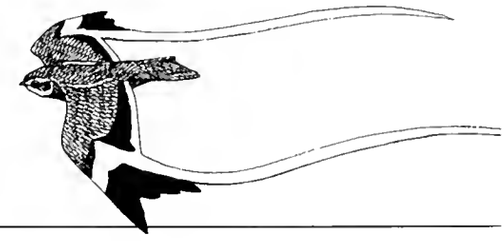


News & Comment

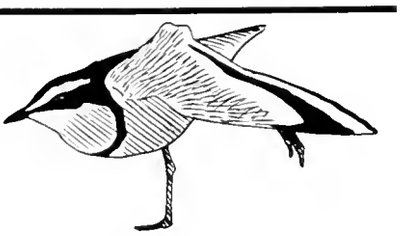
Front cover plate
Prince Ruspoli's Turaco
Tauraco ruspolii
by John Gale

Illustrations
Mark Andrews and Craig Robson

Photographs
Simon Aspinall, Luca Borghesio, Gideon Climo, Callan Cohen, Marc Guyt, Shannon Kenney, Guy M. Kirwan, Jean-Marc Lernould, Giles Mulholland, Hugo J. Rainey, Roland Seitre, Adrian Skerrett, Per Smitterberg and Claire Spottiswoode.

Features

Club News



ABC AGM 2005

The 2005 London meeting and AGM will be held on Saturday 5 March, at the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) offices, 68-71 Newman Street, London W1T 3AH. The nearest Underground stations are Goodge Street, Oxford Circus and Tottenham Court Road. Details of the speakers, the AGM programme and confirmation of venue will be posted to members in early 2005. In order to save on the considerable postage costs involved, Council proposes to send the AGM programme only to UK-based members. The minutes of the AGM are published in the following Bulletin. Overseas members who wish to receive the AGM agenda should notify the Club Secretary via secretary@africanbirdclub.org.

Update to the Bird Recorders list

The new Recorder for Namibia is as follows: Tim Osborne, Tandala Ridge Wildlife Lodge, PO Box 22, Okaukuejo via Outjo, Namibia; e-mail: kori@iway.na.

Buy books and CDs from WildSounds and support ABC

WildSounds, our official bookseller, has recently updated its website to include online ordering and new innovations such as usability icons. ABC is part of their Commission for Conservation scheme under which a proportion of each sale is donated to the Conservation Fund. This is a new innovation for the Club and we would like to thank WildSounds for their continuing support. We ask members to use the scheme when ordering books. To access the scheme you can either link through the ABC website (there is a link on the front page) and thereafter that you accessed through the Club site will be logged. Alternatively, you can access directly via www.wildsounds.co.uk /index.htm?ref=ABC. When you view the contents of your shopping trolley you will see the Commission for Conservation scheme and ABC being mentioned. WildSounds offers a competitive service with post-free books in the UK and is run by specialists in the African birding scene. If ordering by phone, please mention ABC as this will count as well!

The ABC website lists all the major African bird titles and provides reviews and advice for those who are unsure as to which guide is the best to use in the different regions.

Tanzania Waterbird count, January 2005

A countrywide waterbird count is planned for Tanzania in January 2005 covering areas counted in 1995. The count is organised by the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute in conjunction with the BirdLife partner, the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania (WCST), Tanzania National Parks and Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

These organisations are inviting overseas participation. WCST will take the lead in counting coastal areas between the Kenya and Mozambique borders. Volunteers will be afforded free access to parks and reserves, but will have to make a small contribution to vehicle costs etc. The contact at WCST is Elias Mungaya (wcst@africaonline.co.tz).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

André Brosset 1926–2004

A great naturalist, who studied birds and mammals (particularly bats) on several continents. His many contributions to African ornithology include his studies on the biology of raptors, bulbuls, malimbes and the Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* while he worked at the research station at Makokou in Gabon.
[see Obituary: *Alauda* 72: 165–166]

Paul Alexander Zino 1916–2004

Alec Zino was a pioneer in the study and conservation of the birds of Madeira, and especially of Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira*, which since its general recognition as a separate species since the early 1980s has been appropriately named after him. Together with his son, Frank, Alec Zino also studied Trocaz Pigeon *Columba trocaz*, as well as Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea*, on the Selvagems, and Fea's Petrels *Pterodroma feae*, on Bugio, the outermost of the Desertas. Perhaps strangely, as a youth Alec Zino was a proficient and enthusiastic hunter, but underwent a sudden change to the cause of conservation through meeting Christian Jouanin and Francois Roux in the early 1960s.
[see Obituaries: *Br. Birds* 97: 362–363 and *Ibis* 146: 575–576]

Minutes of the Tenth AGM of the African Bird Club

held at the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA)
68–71 Newman Street, London W1 at 13.15 hrs on 13 March 2004

Present

The following registered their attendance at the meeting: Desmond Allen, Jono Angliss, Phil Atkinson, Helen Baker, Neil Baker, David Barker, Roy Barkes, Keith Betton, Miss J. R. Binstead, Mike Blair, Richard Bosanquet, Flip Bruce-Lockhart, David Buchanan, John Caddick, Mark Catterall, Anthony Cheke, Bob Cheke, Kathleen Claydon, Simon Colenutt, Chris Collins, Elaine Cook, Famara Drammeh, David Ebbutt, S. John Farnsworth, David Fox, Hilary Fry, John Gale, Neil Gartshore, Martin Gauntlett, Tony Gibbs, Andrew Grieve, Moira Hargreaves, Roy Hargreaves, Alan Harman, Richard Hearn, Christopher Helm, Alastair Henderson, Chris Hendley, Stephen Jackson, R. J. Jeffers, Michael Kings, Mrs P. A. Lawson, Pete Leonard, Michel Louette, Stephen Lowe, Duncan Macdonald, Clive Mann, Bob Medland, Andy Merritt, William Nicoll, David Porter, Madeleine Prangley, Bill Quantrill, Rowena Quantrill, Geoff Randall, Nigel Redman, Steve Rooke, David Salmon, Keith Seaton, P. J. Sellar, Claire Spottiswoode, Toby Tebbit, Michael Thain, Tony Todd, Louise Warburton, David White, Kay White, Alan Williams, Barbara Woodcock and Martin Woodcock.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: John Armitage, Chris Bowden, Patrick Claffey, David Fisher, Lincoln Fishpool, John Hammick, Frazer Henderson, Steve Jones, Paul Lascelles, Colin McKerrow, Amberley Moore, Yvonne Savidge, Richard Webb, Avi Wells and Geoff Wisdom.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were taken as read and approved unanimously.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

4. Report of the Council for 2003

In introducing the report, copies of which had been distributed at the meeting, the Chairman reported that the past year had been another successful one for the Club. 2003 was marked by the tenth year of publication of the Bulletin, which continued to be well received and the Editorial Board would focus on improvement rather than on change. The website had been revamped and the Club was indebted to Claire Spottiswoode for the new design; the new format had helped raise the Club's profile, especially overseas. Membership numbers were slightly up and local payment schemes had continued to be well used. Sales had generally slowed, although back issues of the Bulletin sold well on the website; the separate sales sheet is distributed with this next *Bulletin*.

The Chairman thanked all of the Club's corporate sponsors, WildSounds and everyone who had responded so generously to the Conservation Appeal. Interest in the Club's Conservation Fund continued to be brisk and many good-quality applications had as a result, regrettably, been turned away: Council would be seeking core funding. ABC would again fund the Abstracts booklet for the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, and hoped to raise sponsorship to enable African delegates to attend the event.

After paying tribute to Crowes (printers for the Bulletin), the Association of British Travel Agents, the Editorial Board, the Conservation Committee and the volunteers who assisted at Rutland and at the AGM, the Chairman added his personal thanks to ABC's Council, in particular to the four members who were standing down—among them Alan Williams, Treasurer for the last five years, with whom it had been a joy to work. The Chairman then welcomed the proposed new Council members.

5. Presentation of the Accounts for 2003 and the Treasurer's Report

In presenting the accounts, copies of which had been distributed at the meeting, the Treasurer reported that the financial position to end December 2003 was very similar to that for the previous year: total assets as shown on the balance sheet were slightly lower. Local Payment Schemes accounted for the apparently contradictory reduction in subscription income, bearing in mind the small increase in membership reported by the Chairman. Higher Bulletin costs reflected the increased number of colour pages, and the Editorial Board would be examining the cost implications of inserting extra colour pages. Gift Aid—at UK£1,400—was a significant contribution to the Club's income. Total expenditure in 2003 was slightly lower than in 2002: the Club was now reaping the benefit of holding the AGM at ABTA. Conservation Awards were considerably up on the previous year, accounting for all of the Fund's income, thus making it obvious that the Club is highly dependent on donations and sales. There were no questions and the accounts were approved unanimously.

6. Election of Council

The following were elected to the African Bird Club Council for 2004: John Armitage, Phil Atkinson, Keith Betton, Flip Bruce-Lockhart, John Caddick, Elaine Cook, Moira Hargreaves, Roy Hargreaves, Al Henderson, Steve Jones, Bill Quantrill, Claire Spottiswoode, Toby Tebbit, Hazell Thompson, Steph Tyler and Richard Webb.

7. Election of Executive Officers

The following were elected as Executive Officers of the Club for 2004:

Chairman:	Phil Atkinson
Vice-Chairman:	Keith Betton
Secretary:	Flip Bruce-Lockhart
Treasurer:	John Caddick

8. Appointment of Auditor

Messrs Burton Sweet were elected as Independent Examiners for 2004.

9. Any Other Business

There being no other business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 13.45 hrs.

African Bird Club—summary statement of accounts at 31 December 2003

*Income and expenditure account—year to 31 December 2003

CLUB ACCOUNT	£ 2003	£ 2002
Income		
Subscriptions	16,231	16,477
Sales and other revenue	810	610
Bank and Building Society Interest	282	257
Tax refund (Gift Aid)	1,407	1,344
	18,730	18,688
Less:		
Bulletin costs (including postage)	15,138	14,186
Income before expenses	3,592	4,502
Expenses		
General expenses—stationery, telephones meetings etc.	2,337	2,960
Finance costs—bank charges, depreciation, accountancy etc.	1,146	1,459
Total expenditure	3,483	4,419
Surplus for the year	109	83
CONSERVATION ACCOUNT		
Income		
Donations and sponsorship	2,313	2,330
Profit on sales of Club merchandise	1,544	1,144
Total income	3,857	3,474
Expenditure		
Conservation Awards paid in year	4,112	2,317
IBA book launch		
Balance for year carried forward	-255	1157

Balance sheet as at December 31st 2003

Fixed assets	2003	2002
Equipment	0	292
Current assets		
Stock of goods for resale	2,332	2,952
Balance at Building Society	8,460	9,178
Balance at Bank	5,132	2,048
	15,924	14,178
Less:		
Current liabilities		
Subscriptions paid in advance	7,142	6,766
Life membership	8,124	6,900
	15,266	13,666
Net current assets	658	512
Total assets	658	804
Represented by:		
Accumulated Club Fund B/F	-394	-477
Surplus for year	109	83
Conservation Fund B/F	1,198	41
Balance for year	-255	1,157
Conservation Fund C/F	943	1198
	658	804

* A copy of the full statement may be obtained from the Club Treasurer.

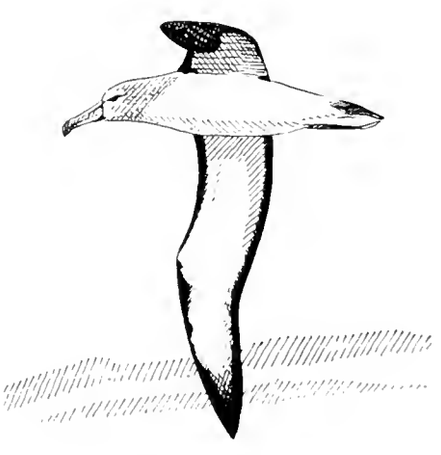
Africa Round-up

General

A new species from Tanzania: Rubeho Akalat

Pamela Beresford, Jon Fjeldså and Jacob Kiure have described a new species of akalat, endemic to the Eastern Arc montane forests in Tanzania. Named Rubeho Akalat *Sheppardia aurantiithorax*, it is distinguished from its presumed sister taxon, Iringa Akalat *S. lowei*, and from Usambara Akalat *S. montana*, by an orange-ochraceous throat and upper breast, the absence of any white on the throat, and a richer copper wash on the upperpart feathers. The morphological distinctiveness is supported by molecular data. The new taxon was mist-netted as early as 1989 in the Ukaguru Mountains, which are located 150 km north of the range of *S. lowei*, but in the absence of specimens the population was referred to as a marginal isolate of *S. lowei*. When in 2000–2001 specimens were finally collected in the Rubeho Mountains, which are adjacent to the Udzungwa range, and later in the Ukaguru Mountains, it appeared that the birds were diagnosably distinct from *S. lowei*. Known calls comprise a series of dry nasal rattles, sometimes separated by low smacking calls; these are lower pitched than similar calls of *S. lowei* and are never followed by the sharp ascending whistles that are often part of that species' repertoire. The song has not yet been recorded. Although *Sheppardia* species appear to be sedentary, the record of one *aurantiithorax* in a lowland forest east of the Mkata Plains suggests that movements into the lowlands take place in the dry season. More field work is required to determine the species' biology, ecological requirements, range and population density.

Source: Auk *121, pp 23–34*



Salvin's Albatross
Thalassarche (*Diomedea*) *cauta salvini*
by Craig Robson

Global bird population decline

The current global estimate of the number of individual birds is 86.7 billion, which is lower than previously thought. A recent analysis calculated that global bird populations have declined by 20–25% worldwide since pre-agricultural times, largely due to conversion of natural vegetation to pasture and cropland.

Source: Proc. Roy. Soc. Lond. B *270, pp 1293–1300*

Conservation status of six albatrosses worsens

New research by BirdLife International has shown that 19 albatross species are at risk of extinction, almost entirely because of the unsustainable levels of mortality caused by longline fishing. The two remaining species, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria palpebrata* and Shy Albatross *Thalassarche* (*Diomedea*) *cauta* are considered Near Threatened. Five species saw their threat status being upgraded to Endangered: Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *T.* (*chlororhynchos*) *chlororhynchos*, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross *T.* (*c.*) *carteri*, Black-browed Albatross *T. melanophrys*, Black-footed Albatross *Phoebastria* (*Diomedea*) *nigripes* and Dark-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria fusca*. The only species previously regarded as 'secure', Laysan Albatross *Phoebastria* (*Diomedea*) *immutabilis*, is now classified as Vulnerable, as new data revealed population declines of at least 30% over three generations.

Source: World Birdwatch *25 (4), p 9*

Identification of the 'soft-plumaged petrel' complex

A recent paper by Andrew Harrop reviews the literature concerning the taxonomy and identification of the 'soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma feael madeira/mollis* complex. It concludes that there are no known consistent plumage differences between Fea's Petrel *P. feae* and Zino's Petrel *P. madeira* and that proposed differences in wing structure remain of unproven validity in the field. At present, only bill structure can be regarded as diagnostic and evaluation of this feature will require excellent views at close range. The author draws attention to a feature that had not been noted before: in the heavier billed Fea's Petrel the distance between the tip of the nostril and the back of the hook at the tip of the upper mandible is very short, forming a short notch in profile. In slimmer billed Zino's Petrel the distance is longer and forms the impression of a wedge. Between Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis* and *P. feael madeira* some consistent plumage differences exist which make field identification of *P. mollis* possible. On pale morphs of *P. mollis* the crown is typically paler than on *P. feael madeira* and therefore contrasts more strongly with the dark facial mask. The mantle and greater coverts are also paler grey and there is a variable, but typically bold, grey

breast-band. However, light and wind can have a significant effect on the appearance of birds at sea, so these factors must be taken into account.

Source: Brit. Birds *97, pp 6–15*

Migration, wintering and breeding of a Lesser Spotted Eagle tracked by satellite

An adult male Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* that occupied the same nest site in Slovakia for 11 years running (1992–2002) was fitted with two satellite transmitters by Bernd Meyburg and his co-workers. In 1994 and 2000–2002 its behaviour during migration was followed in detail by means of satellite telemetry. The results of this study have now been published. The eagle took the known route for this species to South Africa. In 2001 it spent 43% of the year at its breeding site, 33% in its winter quarters, with the remaining 24% being spent on migration. In three cases the autumn migration took 40, 48 and 61 days respectively. In two cases the spring migration occupied 49 days. All five recorded migrations averaged a daily flight distance of 178 km. The longest flight distance was recorded from 30 March to 2 April 2001, between Uganda and the Red Sea, during which the bird covered a total of 1,650 km, averaging 412 km per day. The wintering grounds, where in two years the bird spent around 3.5 months, comprised a large part of Zimbabwe together with the Kruger National Park in South Africa and neighbouring parts of Mozambique. The annual journeys flown, including movements around the wintering grounds, amounted in 2000/01 to at least 20,396 km and in 2001/02 to 19,041 km.

Source: J. Orn. *145, pp 1–7*

Major new analysis of wader population status in Africa and western Eurasia

The International Wader Study Group (WSG) has published a major review of the status of 131 populations of 55 species of migratory waders (shorebirds) in Africa and Western Eurasia.
Extensive analyses consider thematic, taxonomic and geographic status and issues.

It appears that of the 131 populations, 45 are of significant conservation concern because their populations are in decline and/or are small. Some of these are threatened with extinction. Others are in very rapid decline. Populations using the East Atlantic Flyway are the best known, with a little over one-third in decline. Knowledge of populations using the other two major flyways is much poorer, and their status is much poorer too: of populations with known trends, 53% of those on the West Asian/East Africa Flyway are in decline, as are 55% of those on the Black Sea/Mediterranean Flyway. Western Europe is the area with the largest number of declining waders. As this is also the region with the most complete international nature conservation legislation, there is an urgent need to refocus the implementation of this legislation. Major gaps in our knowledge remain: for 60% of populations considered, monitoring is insufficient to provide even the most basic information on trends.

Source: International Wader Study Group May 2004

Why are nightjars attracted to roads at night?

Nightjars are often seen on roads throughout Africa and road traffic is a major cause of death for Afrotropical nightjars (see *Bull ABC* 11: 4). But why are they attracted to roads? There has been much speculation on the possible reasons, such as dust-bathing, collecting grit or insects (dead or alive) from the road surface, resting on a drier, warmer or cooler surface, or foraging for flying insects. Field work in Zimbabwe by nightjar researcher H. D. Jackson showed that most of the prevailing theories can be discarded and that nightjars use roads as an observation platform for hunting during the first few hours after sunset and subsequently as a place for resting and digesting. Afrotropical nightjars forage most commonly by hawking single insects from a terrestrial or elevated observation post, and a nightjar sitting on a road can easily see flying insects silhouetted against the sky, but so can a nightjar in a natural open space. So the question remains why nightjars are attracted to roads in the first place. Jackson suggests that nightjars have learned over time to associate lights with flying insects and are therefore also attracted to roads, where insects are attracted to lights of moving vehicles at night and consequently occur in greater numbers.

Source: Ostrich *74, pp 228–229*

Systematics of *Alethe, Sheppardia* and related taxa re-examined

A molecular study was carried out by Pamela Beresford to resolve taxonomic uncertainties concerning alethes *Alethe*, akalats *Sheppardia* and some robin chats *Cossypha*. As a result, the author suggests that the genus *Alethe* comprises only two species, *A. castanea* and *A. diadematа* (treated as a single species by *Birds of Africa*), whilst the four other species previously considered as congenerics, *poliocephala, fuelleborni, poliophrys* and *choloensis*, are grouped into a new genus *Pseudalethe* (and not vice versa, as in Sinclair & Ryan 2003, *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara*). Grey-winged Robin Chat *Cossypha polioptera* is included in *Sheppardia*, whilst Usambara Akalat *Sheppardia montana*, Iringa Akalat *S. lowei* and the newly described Rubeho Akalat *S. aurantiithorax* (see above) are *incertae sedis* but provisionally retained in *Sheppardia*.

Source: Ostrich *74, pp 58–73*

International Common Crane Network

The European Crane Working Group (http://www.kraniche.vogelfreund.net/db) is developing an international reporting network. It is looking for people who could provide information on the population of Common Cranes *Grus grus* in African countries where they have been observed on passage or winter-

ing (e.g. Algeria, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libya, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan). Interested observers should contact Otwin Franz, European Crane Working Group / International Crane Network on e-mail grus-grus@vogelfreund.net.

Source: *AfricanBirding May 2004*

Connecting conservationists in Africa

A news service is being developed which aims to collect information on Africa's environment and to do something with it. Africa Environmental News Service (AENS) is the first news service dedicated to environmental information about Africa and is expected to provide a resource that draws attention to the linkages between Africa's environmental health and its potential for sustainable development and alleviation of poverty (http://www.aens.org).

Source: *CEPF E-News January 2004*

North Africa & North Atlantic Islands

Black-headed Gull breeding in Morocco

The first breeding of Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* in Africa was reported from Al Massira reservoir, *c.*125 km south of Casablanca, Morocco, in May–July 2002. A colony numbering *c.*70 adults was found on an islet in the reservoir and 28 nests were counted. Breeding has been suspected once previously in Morocco, when two juveniles that were barely able to fly were observed at a coastal wetland south of Casablanca in July 1977, but this cannot be considered a certain proof of breeding, as recently fledged young accompanied by adult birds begin to arrive in North Africa from Europe in July.

Source: Alauda *72, pp 59–60*

Algerian White Stork population increasing

Following a decline until 1991, the breeding population of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* in Algeria has dramatically increased. Surveys carried out in 1995–2001 indicated a 75% increase in breeding pairs during that period. In 2001, *c.*4,500 pairs raised over 9,500 young. A majority of nests was found outside human settlements, with many nests built on pylons (34% in 2001) and in trees (44%). The expansion of the breeding population is thought to be the result of increased survival rates, which is possibly due to improved conditions in the wintering areas in sub-Saharan Africa (better rains), a higher number of sedentary birds and the use of refuse tips for feeding.

Source: Alauda *72, pp 47–52*

Raso Lark population declining

Monitoring work on the Critically Endangered Raso Lark *Alauda razae*, endemic to the small Cape Verde island of Raso, has shown that its numbers are falling. In 2001, *c.*130 birds were counted, two-thirds of which were males. Subsequent visits in 2002 and 2003 found that the population had fallen to an estimated 98 birds, of which only 30 were females. The cause of this continued decline is presumed to be the prolonged drought. Between November 2001 and January 2003 there has been little rainfall, and consequently little breeding. An additional cause of concern is that recent massive tourist developments on the nearby islands of São Nicolau and São Vicente increases the risk of accidental introduction of rats or cats to Raso, while unregulated visiting by tourists will cause disturbance to the birds and could lead to nests being trampled.

Source: World Birdwatch *25 (4), p 5*

West & Central Africa

Hornbills distinguish between primate alarm calls

A study in Taï National Park, Côte d'Ivoire, has demonstrated that Yellow-casqued Hornbills *Ceratogymna elata*, a Near-Threatened western African endemic, responded to playback of Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus* shrieks by calling and approaching the loudspeaker, but that the birds did not respond to

Yellow-casqued Hornbills *Ceratogymna elata* by Mark Andrews

Leopard *Panthera pardus* growls. The hornbills, which are among the largest birds in the forest, are vulnerable to predation by Crowned Eagles, but are not preyed on by Leopards. More interestingly, Hugo Rainey and colleagues found that Yellow-casqued Hornbills were also able to distinguish between the alarm calls that Diana Monkeys *Cercopithecus diana* make to these two predators. They responded to playback of Diana alarm calls to Crowned Eagles but not Diana alarm calls to Leopards. This is the first study to show that birds have the capability to distinguish between the alarm calls of a sympatric mammal species.

Source: Proc. Roy. Soc. Lond. B *271, pp 755–759*

White-necked Picathartes rediscovered in Ghana

Until 2003, it was widely believed that White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* had been extirpated from Ghanaian forests. Since the 1960s, all attempts to locate this species in the country had indeed been unsuccessful. However, one was mist-netted and photographed between Ayum and Subim forest reserves (06°71'N 02°73'W) in Brong-Ahafo Region,

on 26 March 2003. With the help of a local hunter, a nest site was found containing two nests, of which one was new.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. *124, pp 151–153*

Liberia increases protected areas

In November 2003 Liberia's interim government published three new bills that represent a 60% increase in protected areas and a dramatic reform of the country's natural resource conservation policies. Sapo National Park, an Important Bird Area (IBA) of *c.*130,000 ha in the south-east, will increase by 50,000 ha, and the creation of the Nimba Nature Reserve, another IBA at the border with Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, will protect an additional 13,500 ha.

Source: Oryx *38, p 125*

Society for the conservation of Congo's birds

The 'Amicale Congolaise pour la Conservation des Oiseaux' (ACCO) was started by two young ornithologists from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), following discussions held at the 10th Pan-African Ornithological Congress in Kampala, Uganda, in 2000. ACCO aims to work with local communities and establish partnerships with national and international non-governmental organisations for the conservation of birds. It has already gathered information on Important Bird Areas and wetlands in the eastern part of the country. ACCO welcomes everyone, Congolese and foreigners, interested in conserving birds in the DRC. For more information, contact Emile Mulotwa at the Faculté des Sciences, Université de Kisangani, DRC; e-mail: accordc2000@yahoo.fr.

Source: BirdLife Africa/Afrique *5(3), p3*

East Africa

Eastern Arc gold rush threatening reserves in Tanzania

A gold rush currently taking place in Tanzania is threatening nature and forest reserves in the Eastern Arc, including the Amani reserve. This has caused a great deal of local concern, although it is not widely known about outside the region. According to most accounts the population on the Amani Plateau appears to have quadrupled in four weeks since the discovery of gold. Prices of staples in the markets and bus fares have increased by 30–50% and many tea pickers have abandoned the tea estates and are now mining. In one reserve a peak of 40,000 people was recorded. Activities appear to be centred around the village of Sakale on the Monga Tea Estate.

During January to March 2004 staff from the UN Development Programme, the Forest and Beekeeping Division and NGO staff visited all 14 districts containing Eastern Arc mountains in Tanzania. Information was collected on the current status of gold mining across the entire range and its effects on forest habitats; the situation is definitely worrying. The full report with photos can be viewed at the ABC website (www.africanbirdclub.org).

Source: *Bill Newmark* in litt. *Nov 2003 and Phil Atkinson* in litt. *to* AfricanBirding, *March 2004*

First population survey of Loveridge's Sunbird

A study to estimate the population size of Loveridge's Sunbird *Cinnyris loveridgei*, endemic to the Uluguru Mountains, eastern Tanzania, was conducted in September–December 2000. Mist-nets were used to gather data at 11 sites at 1,300–2,600 m altitude in four different areas. The computer programme CAPTURE was used to estimate the population at each site. Combining the data on the forest area with assumed home range sizes (which is unknown for this species) of 0.1 km^2 to 0.8 km^2, resulted in an estimated total population ranging from 21,000 to 166,000 individuals. A median home range of 0.45 km^2 estimates the population close to 37,000 individuals. Loveridge's Sunbird was found within Uluguru North and South Forest Reserves, and Bunduki reserve, but was absent from other smaller reserves in the Ulugurus. Although the species does not seem threatened, its long-term survival will depend on the survival of the forest.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *14, pp 25–32*

Density and species richness of bird communities in papyrus studied

The results of a study into the effects of habitat degradation on avian guilds in East African papyrus *Cyperus papyrus* swamps suggest that the species richness of bird communities in stands of papyrus disturbed by burning, grazing or pollution is higher than in nearby stands that are not disturbed. However, there are fewer species and individuals of highly specialised birds or species characteristic of papyrus, such as Papyrus Gonolek *Laniarius mufumbiri* and White-winged Warbler *Bradypterus carpalis*, in disturbed than in undisturbed swamps. These findings match the case of forest bird communities, where disturbance by human activities does not favour specialist species, which as a group are of conservation concern. Specialist species may occur at high densities, but if they are restricted to one habitat, they run a high risk of extinction through habitat loss or degradation. Species richness should therefore not be the only consideration when conservation

Papyrus Gonolek
Laniarius mufumbiri
by Mark Andrews

resources are targetted: the extent to which species are specialists should also be taken into account.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *13, pp 283–297*

New Ramsar site in Uganda

Nabugabo Wetlands, an Important Bird Area (IBA) adjacent to Lake Victoria, but separated from it by an arm of the Lwamunda swamp and a sandbar, has been declared Uganda's second Ramsar site. It hosts five globally threatened species, including Blue Swallow *Hirundo atrocaerulea*. Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* and the scarce Papyrus Canary *Serinus koliensis* also occur. The site is also vital for fish species that have been extirpated in Lake Victoria by the introduction of Nile Perch.

Source: World Birdwatch *26 (1) p 3*

Stripe-breasted Tits in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda

Requests published in previous issues of the *Bulletin* for self-funded volunteers to gather data on the breeding behaviour of the Stripe-breasted Tit *Parus fasciiventer* at nest boxes placed at Ruhija in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda (see *Bull ABC* 4: 67 & 10: 13) received favourable responses. Data gathered during several breeding seasons are now being processed. However, more work is still required. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Phil Shaw (phil.shaw@snh.gov.uk) or Derek Pomeroy (derek@imul.com).

Source: *Dr David Ebbutt* in litt. *May 2004*

Mounting pressure on Rusizi National Park, Burundi

The human pressure on Rusizi National Park, which lies *c.*15 km north-west of Bujumbura, in Burundi, abutting the Congo border, has increased considerably as a result of the ongoing civil war. Dieudonné Bizimana has been engaged in field work in the park for some years and continues to monitor the situation despite considerable difficulties. He reports that, with the local economy suffering from the war, people increasingly use the park for collecting wood and reeds, grazing cattle and fishing. This has led to loss of bird species richness and overall bird numbers. Rusizi is an Important Bird Area (IBA) and supports a wide variety of waterbirds.

Source: Michael Westlake in litt. *June 2004*

Indian Ocean islands

Four new bird species for Socotra documented

During surveys carried out in November–December 1999, four new birds for Socotra (and for Yemen) were recorded: Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*, Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*, Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idae* and Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*. These have now been documented and photographs of the first three published.

Source: Sandgrouse *26, pp 48–51*

Socotra conservationist appointed

Nadim Taleb, who has been involved with Socotra biodiversity projects since 1998, has taken the lead role in managing the Socotra Conservation and Development Programme (funded by the UN Development Programme). During the Darwin Initiative programme of 1999–2002, he received training from BirdLife International in bird identification, conservation and survey techniques. Nadim, who has recently obtained his MSc in Applied Ecology and Conservation at the University of East Anglia, UK, discovered the world's first nesting site of Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* in 2001.

Source: Br. Birds *97, p 206*

Seychelles Black Paradise Flycatcher increasing but still threatened by habitat loss

A study of the distribution and population of the Critically Endangered Seychelles Black Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone corvina*, carried out on La Digue, Seychelles, in 2001, estimated the current world population of the species at 218–290 individuals in a *c.*4.4 km^2 range. The reasons for this significant increase from only *c.*25 pairs in 1978–1988 are unclear, but correspond with improved species awareness and protection. Territories were more widely distributed than previously recorded and not exclusively associated with coastal plateaux or freshwater bodies, contrary to previous descriptions. Distribution appeared to be determined largely by the presence of high-canopy, native, broadleaf trees. Given that ongoing and planned development threatens long-term conservation of forest, the existence of a breeding population of paradise flycatchers in low hill forest is important and suggests that conservation measures should be taken there. As La Digue currently holds the only known population of the bird, the creation of additional populations on other islands is vital and reintroduction should be considered a priority in the conservation of this species.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *13, pp 307–318*

Why do Seychelles Warblers fail to recolonise nearby islands?

The rare Seychelles Warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis*, an island endemic listed as Vulnerable, occurred only on tiny Cousin Island (29 ha), Seychelles, from 1920 to 1988, where its population reached an all-time low of 50 birds in 1965. Management of Cousin as a nature reserve resulted in a spectacular recovery, with a now stable population of *c.*100 breeding pairs and 120 surplus birds. Habitat saturation has led to cooperative breeding, whereby a substantial proportion of adults never acquire a breeding territory or produce offspring. Although the presence of suitable islands nearby means that dispersal to these could result in higher reproductive success, Seychelles Warblers extremely rarely attempt to move to another island. Jan Komdeur and his co-workers examined why this was the case. It appears that the warblers have not lost the ability to fly over the distances required to recolonise islands

Seychelles Warbler
Acrocephalus sechellensis
by Mark Andrews

in the Seychelles, but have a behavioural reluctance to cross what they may regard as extensive bodies of water. This 'psychological flightlessness' is known in other species that are capable of sustained flight. The authors suggest that the reluctance to disperse across water could have developed a long time ago, when all Seychelles islands were perhaps fully occupied by warblers and dispersal over water was therefore not an adaptive strategy. They conclude that the case of the Seychelles Warbler may exemplify the inability of natural selection to plan ahead.

Source: Ibis *146, pp 298–302*

Cousin Island gains award

Cousin Island Special Reserve, managed by BirdLife International's local partner, Nature Seychelles, has won a prestigious Highly Commended award in the 11th annual British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow awards. The competition showcases some of the world's role models for responsible tourism and recognises organisations in the tourism industry that have made a positive contribution towards their local natural and cultural environment. Cousin Island narrowly missed out as the Global Winner among 70 entries from 37 nations. It was selected as 'a model in sound ecotourism practices where conservation measures have assisted in bringing back species on the verge of extinction'. Among these is the Seychelles Warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis* (see previous item) and Seychelles Magpie Robin *Copsychus sechellarum*, whose numbers have increased from only 15 individuals confined to Frégate island in 1965 to *c.*125 on several islands today, including more than 20 on Cousin. Cousin attracts some 10,000 visitors a year and also caters for educational groups and locals. It is open to visitors four days a week (Tuesday–Friday) but there is no overnight accommodation. Visitors pay an entry fee of US$25/EUR25. For further information, contact Nature Seychelles on e-mail nature@seychelles.net.

Source: *BirdLife International*

ABC members support Seychelles LEAP programme

LEAP is a benefit-sharing mechanism designed by Nature Seychelles to support environmental protection and awareness at local levels. The benefits of this small-grant mechanism are delivered through the Seychelles wildlife clubs, whose members formulate required needs and actions and execute corresponding activities. As grassroots organisations established mostly in schools and working at the district level, the wildlife clubs are well positioned to influence local people and activities. In 2003 the LEAP programme supported small projects, stakeholder outreach activities, awards and publications. ABC members in Seychelles participated in funding various initiatives, such as field trips, the production of field guides, the provision of information kiosks, the awards for the best wildlife club in 2003 etc.

Source: Nature Seychelles in litt. *March 2004*

Van Dam's Vanga discovered in mangroves

In March 2001, a Van Dam's Vanga *Xenopirostris damii* was sighted in a mangrove *Avicennia marina* forest. The sighting was made 30 km north-east of the locality where the type series was collected in 1864 and represents the only record of the species in that area since then. It is also the first record in mangrove forest: it was previously presumed that Van Dam's Vanga was restricted to primary dry deciduous forest. If the species occurs in extensive mangroves along Madagascar's northwest coast, its global population may be greater than previously thought.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. *124, pp 69–71*

Madagascar Fish Eagle tentatively making comeback

Despite damaging encroachment on its fish diet and forest habitat, the Madagascar Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides* is making a tentative comeback due to the guardianship of local fishing communities as part of a project by The Peregrine Fund in Madagascar. The Peregrine Fund (http://www.peregrinefund.org) is assisting with the legal transfer of control and management of natural resources from the government to indigenous communities and the associations created to represent their interests. Following work by the community associations to more closely monitor and conserve fish populations and protect wetlands and forest habitat, surveys in the three adjoining freshwater lakes of Ankerika, Befotaka and Soamalipo have found 18 male and nine female Madagascar Fish Eagles and seven fledglings.

Source: CEPF E-News *February 2004*

Large grant for Madagascar environment

In May 2004 the World Bank approved an International Development Association Development Grant of $40 million and a Global Environment Facility Trust Fund Grant of $9 million to support implementation of the third phase of Madagascar's National Environment Action Plan. The grant constitutes the single-largest concessional financing package for the environment provided by the Bank in its 60-year history. The Third Environment Program Support Project will expand Madagascar's protected areas network to include key missing habitats, establish con-

servation sites in natural forests and transfer forest management responsibilities to communities.

Source: CEPF E-News *June 2004*

New date for extinction of the Dodo

The Dodo *Raphus cucullatus*, a flightless bird weighing *c.*23 kg and endemic to the island of Mauritius, was hunted to extinction in the 17th century. The last confirmed sighting dates from 1662, although there is a claim from 1674. A statistical method has now been used to establish the actual extinction date as 1690, almost 30 years after the last confirmed sighting. When a species becomes increasingly rare before its extinction, as was the case with the Dodo, it may continue to exist unseen for many years.

Source: Nature *426 (6964), p 245*

Southern Africa

Cave breeding by African Penguins in Namibia

The only currently confirmed mainland breeding site of African Penguins *Spheniscus demersus* in Namibia is located in a cave near the northern extreme of the species' breeding range on the edge of the Namib Desert. For the African Penguin cave breeding is only known from this site, named Sylvia Hill, and a shallow cave on Plumpudding Island, also in Namibia. Robert Simmons and Jessica Kemper gathered information on the status and breeding ecology of the species at Sylvia Hill, and found 240–300 birds and *c.*90 active nests, with a laying peak in January. At this site, eggs are laid on top of guano mounds and not in burrows, as is usual for this species. The researchers concluded that the colony is healthy and thriving, despite a general decline of the species in southern Africa.

Source: Ostrich *74, pp 217–221*

Flamingo movements tracked by satellite

Details of flamingo migrations to and from their breeding and non-breeding sites and what triggers them remain unknown. In an attempt to uncover some of the mystery behind these migrations, the first satellite-tracking project on flamingos in southern Africa was carried out at the Makgadikgadi saltpans in northern Botswana in July 2001.Three Lesser *Phoeniconaias minor* and two Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus* (*ruber*) *roseus* were equipped with small satellite telemetry devices. Following their departure from Makgadikgadi in February 2002, they were followed for the next six months. It appeared that a very varied dispersal took place, with destinations including sites in Namibia, South Africa and Mozambique. Migration was only recorded during nighttime and flight speeds were estimated as being 60 and 65 km/hour. The results show that flamingos are highly scattered and their movements can be nomadic, incorporating visits to many smaller wetlands. Migratory connections of southern African populations with those of East Africa cannot be ruled out. The satellite-tracking study of flamingos from Makgadikgadi will continue.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding *9 (3), pp 14–15*

Black Kite attacks light aircraft

An adult Black (Yellow-billed) Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus* apparently attacked a light aircraft in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, on 15 February 2004. The aircraft was flying at a speed of *c.*160 km/h at 1,200 m altitude near Pietermaritzburg, when the pilot suddenly saw a Black Kite diving at a very high speed, with its wings tucked in, towards him. The kite smashed into the leading edge of a wing, piercing the laminated wood, thereby embedding its entire body. The pilot narrowly missed being forced into a crash landing and returned to the airfield with the bird still wedged in the wing.

Black (Yellow-billed) Kite
Milvus migrans parasitus
by Mark Andrews

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding *9 (2), p 20*

Sunbirds discovered to pollinate orchids with their feet

Birds are known to pollinate certain flowers by transferring pollen on their head feathers, their bill or even their tongue (see e.g. *Bull ABC* 6: 7). Researchers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, have now discovered that sunbirds feeding on nectar of certain tall orchid species of the genus *Disa*, do not perch on the stems, but grasp the lower flowers, causing pollen packets to become glued to their toes. In this manner pollen is transferred between flowers by the birds' feet. Although this is a first for orchids, it has long been suspected that a similar pollination technique is used in South African crane flowers *Strelitzia*.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding *9 (3), pp 18–19*

The Sperrgebiet: Namibia's new national park

Known worldwide as the source of exclusive diamonds, the Sperrgebiet is set to become the gem of Namibia's protected areas as the result of a recent decision by the country's government to proclaim the region as a national park. The Sperrgebiet, which means 'Forbidden Area' in Afrikaans, covers some 26,000 km^2 of dunes and mountains that seem stark but shelter numerous biodiversity gems. As a mining concession it has been off-limits to the public and scientists for most of the last century. Though the trespassing restrictions of mining have helped to keep much of the Sperrgebiet pristine until now,

exploration for new mineral riches and 'emergency grazing' on its eastern grasslands are just two of the land-use pressures facing this fragile area. The Sperrgebiet boasts the highest levels of biodiversity in Namibia. As such, the area has been identified as a priority area for conservation in the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Plan (SKEP), a 20-year strategy that now guides conservation action in this hotspot.

Source: CEPF E-News June 2004

Vaal Dam: South Africa's 102nd IBA

During a major waterbird survey covering much of the 1,400 km shoreline of the Vaal Dam, located at the border between Gauteng and Free State, in January 2004, 10,034 birds of 73 species were counted. The total of birds present was even larger, as certain productive areas were not counted. The discovery of a relatively large breeding population of Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia* was particularly important, with 206 birds counted. BirdLife South Africa has announced that the Vaal Dam meets the criteria for an Important Bird Area (IBA) and will be added to the list of 101 sites already recognised in the country.

Source: Newsletter of BirdLife South Africa *7(2), p 15*

Southern Ocean Islands

Are mice killing Tristan Albatross chicks on Gough?

A year-long study by Richard Cuthbert and Erica Summer in 2000/2001 demonstrated that the annual population of Tristan Albatrosses *Diomedea (exulans) dabbenena*, which occurs only on Gough, with a relict population of 2–3 pairs on Inaccessible Island in the Tristan da Cunha group, approached 5,000 birds. The researchers also found a surprisingly low breeding success due to poor chick survival. This was unexpected, as most breeding failures among the great albatrosses occur during the egg stage. Even more unexpected was the possible explanation: predation by the introduced House Mouse *Mus musculus*. The scanty information that this 40-g animal, known to eat mainly invertebrates and seeds on Gough, might be able to kill a chick weighing more than 5 kg was based on a few rump wounds seen. In September 2003, John Cooper undertook the annual environmental inspection and checked 200 albatross chicks for damage to their rumps, but found only a few with signs of partially healed wounds. No fresh wounds were seen and Cooper surmises that the mice, if they do indeed attack chicks, only do so when the birds are younger, before their down starts to be replaced by more protective feathers. The question thus remains unresolved, but a new research team will try to find out what is really happening to the albatrosses in the next breeding attempt.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding *9 (1), pp 46–50*

Internet resources

State of the world's birds 2004

BirdLife International has released a report 'State of the world's birds 2004'. This important assessment of the threats faced by birds, including examples from Africa, can be downloaded for free at http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/sowb/index.html.

Analysis of wader population status in Africa and western Eurasia

The International Wader Study Group's 259-page review of the status of migratory waders in Africa and Western Eurasia (see above) can be found on its website http://www.waderstudygroup.org.

Nature's Hotspots

The recently published Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund brochure *Protecting Nature's Hotspots for People and Prosperity* can be downloaded at http://www.cepf.net/xp/cepf/static/pdfs/CEPFbrochure.2004.pdf.

Roberts VII

To download the final Roberts VII list and a full account of all the taxonomic changes go to http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/fitzpatrick/docs/robnews.html.

Avian Discography

Published bird sound recordings of over 7,500 species are listed at http://www.birrding.freeserve.co.uk.

Information on swallows, martins and swifts

A website dedicated to discussing and disseminating information on the above species is http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Swallows-Martins-Swifts-Worldwide/. A French-language site also exists: http://fr.groups.yahoo.com/group/martinets-hirondelles/.

Seawatching in Senegal

Information to prepare a seawatching trip to Senegal, with selective lists of seabird species, can be found at http://senegal.seawatching.net/.

African Bird Club *Conservation Fund*

ABC Conservation Fund News

Through the generosity of several sponsors, the Conservation Fund is now much healthier. The Swedish tour company Avifauna has donated money towards a project in the Seychelles (see below) and we have also received generous donations from the Wetlands Trust and Mr A. P. Leventis. As a result of these and donations by members, we have been able to commit funding to six more projects and to make an expedition award. Awards have been given or promised to the following projects.

Survey of Djibouti Francolin

The proposed survey by Houssein Rayaleh of the Endangered Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus* was mentioned in the last Bulletin. ABC was able to provide UK£750 towards the survey, which commenced in February 2004.

Survey work in the West Usambaras, Tanzania

ABC provided a small grant of US$300 to Billy Munisi, who is undergoing a certificate programme in wildlife management at the College of African Wildlife at Moshi in Tanzania, and Martin Joho, an ecology trainee of Norbert J. Cordeiro. The award enabled them to undertake forest habitat appraisal and baseline searches for globally threatened birds of the West Usambara Mountains, Tanzania, under the supervision of Norbert Cordeiro. Work started in December 2003 and continued until early February 2004.

The survey aimed to discover which globally threatened bird species exist in some of the forest remnants and which species remain to be discovered in several key and yet poorly explored West Usambara forests. It also aimed to document habitat conditions and immediate threats, particularly in Shagayu, Balangai, Dindira and Mahesangulu Forest Reserves, and a small lowland outlier, Kwenhondwe forest, which is unprotected and may no longer exist. These forests have received very scant attention as many envelop remote areas of the West Usambara Mountains.

The Usambara Akalat *Sheppardia montana* (Endangered), Usambara Weaver *Ploceus nicolli* (Endangered), Usambara Eagle Owl *Bubo vosseleri* (Vulnerable), Banded Green Sunbird *Anthreptes rubritorques* (Vulnerable) and Usambara Hyliota *Hyliota usambarae* (Endangered) are known from the West Usambaras, but very few data concerning their overall distribution are available. It is also conceivable that some of the lower altitude forests, such as Balangai, may hold additional threatened taxa (e.g. Dappled Mountain Robin *Modulatrix orostruthus*). Findings from this project will assist the forest department in prioritising conservation activities.

In mid-February Norbert reported that Billy Munisi and Martin Joho had spent less time than anticipated in three forests due to soaring expenses because of the drought. The forests were very quiet, but it is of great interest that they observed 12 Usambara Weavers in total in three forests. A report is awaited and Norbert is hoping to secure more funding to extend the survey.

Translocation of Seychelles Fody and Seychelles Warbler

The aim of this project is to significantly improve the conservation status of two of Seychelles' threatened endemic birds, by establishing new populations on Denis Island. For Seychelles Fody *Foudia sechellarum*, the project has the potential to ensure its removal from the list of globally threatened species. The translocation will also foster the development of ecotourism on Denis, a Seychelles-owned resort that has invested in environmental enhancement including the eradication of alien mammals and improvements to native forest habitats. It could be used as a model for future translocations of these and other species. The project is being co-ordinated by Nature Seychelles, the local partner of BirdLife International. Denis Island is regarded as suitable for translocating the fody and warbler for several reasons, including its predator-free status (cats were eradicated in 2000 and rats and mice in 2002) and habitat (under a GEF-funded project in 2001, areas of habitat were restored by Nature Seychelles, with the removal of dense stands of

coconut and the planting of native trees to supplement existing *Terminalia* forests).

The budget is being co-funded by the partner organisations undertaking the transfer (Nature Seychelles, Denis Island and Frégate Island), and from other sources. A sum of UK£750 was sought from ABC in order to part-fund helicopter costs for the transfer. Nature Seychelles has now received this money through sponsorship by Avifauna, and in late March we learned that the translocation of the fodies had successfully taken place. The translocation of the warblers is scheduled for June 2004.

Population study of Madagascar Plover and promoting public awareness of wetland conservation in Madagascar

Madagascar Plover *Charadrius thoracicus* is an endemic shorebird that was until recently classified as Near Threatened (BirdLife International 2000), but has now been upgraded to Vulnerable. Between 2002 and 2003 Sama Zefania visited major wetlands in Madagascar and collected the most detailed information yet available on the species' distribution and ecology. The surveys revealed that Madagascar Plover is more widespread than thought, although breeding sites are scattered, and at most only a handful of plovers breed, and numbers fluctuate markedly.

To reveal the most important threats and to assess the risk of extinction, a population study is needed. Sama proposed to undertake such a study in Marambitsy Bay, where he will examine breeding success, mortality, threats and population trends. He also hopes to improve the profile of wetland conservation among the Malagasy people by preparing, printing and distributing photos of threatened wetland sites, and information leaflets about wetlands.

Sama Zefania, who is to work in close association with the conservation group Asity, is to receive an award of UK£998.

Monitoring breeding seasonality and group size in Hinde's Babbler in Kenya

John Musina, of the Department of Ornithology at the National Museums of Kenya, was awarded UK£720 by ABC for his proposed study of Hinde's Babbler *Turdoides hindei*, a globally threatened Kenyan endemic. The range of the babbler is predominantly within the catchments of the upper Tana and Athi rivers, with seemingly isolated populations in Meru, Kitui and Nziu. Over the past century its range has contracted and fragmented, almost certainly through scrub clearance. In 1994–2001, some 70% of its known population was within intensively cultivated farmland around Kianyaga and Mukurweini, and only 8% was found in two legally protected areas. Its global population has recently been estimated at 1,500–5,600 birds.

Although surveys undertaken in 1994 by Njoroge & Bennun and in 2000–01 by Shaw *et al.* provided a baseline for future monitoring, their findings were based on several key assumptions, which remain untested. Breeding success was estimated from the ratio of adult: young birds, based mainly on eye colour. However, the age at which eye colour changes, from dark grey (at fledging) through brown (immature) to orange-red (adult) is unknown. It is therefore impossible to distinguish whether the young birds encountered represent productivity over, for example, the previous three months, six months or the entire year. Based on laying records for several *Turdoides* in Kenya, it was assumed that productivity in Hinde's Babbler peaked during the long rains, i.e. in February–April. This requires confirmation, however, as Hinde's Babbler clutches have been recorded or inferred in June–September and December, as well during the long rains. Finally, it was assumed that taped calls played during Hinde's Babbler surveys normally elicit a response from all adults in each group. This has a strong bearing on the accuracy of survey results and on our understanding of the relationship between group size and breeding outcome. The reliability of this method also remains untested.

These and other basic measures of the species' biology and social organisation are poorly known, but influence the validity of past and future survey results, and any inferences made regarding breeding performance. Their influence would, nonetheless, be relatively easy to assess through repeated observations of a small sample of groups. Thus, John Musina and colleagues aim to test the assumptions listed above. As well as providing basic information on the biology of a

threatened species, the proposed work will provide training for members of an Important Bird Area support group.

Eradication programme of House Crows in Cape Town, South Africa

House Crow *Corvus splendens* was introduced into Africa during the last century where, in the absence of natural predators, its numbers have increased. Several projects exist to control its populations in Africa. The population in Cape Town, South Africa, is still rather small (± 2,000 birds), and the aim of this project is to remove the species before it can increase and become a problem. The Western Cape Nature Conservation Board (the conservation authority within Cape Town province) and the Cape Metropolitan Council (municipal authority of Cape Town) initiated the project in January 2003, with the employment of a full-time staff member.

House Crows have a major ecological (and agricultural) impact in areas that they colonise, and in some cases have resulted in the local extinctions of significant numbers of indigenous birds, through predation and harassment. The House Crow also poses a major health threat, as it is known to carry at least eight species of human enteric parasites. In addition they may be passive carriers of a wide range of disease organisms acquired through their association with human excreta, refuse and decomposing carcasses.

ABC is providing 10,000 Rands (*c.*UK£1,000) towards this project, which is also being supported by BirdLife South Africa.

Expedition Award

ABC is pleased to announce that the 2004 Expedition Award of UK£1,000 was made to Oxford University & REST—The Rare and Endangered Species Trust, for a survey of Cape Vultures *Gyps coprotheres* in Namibia. The expedition will take place during summer 2004.

This vulture is considered 'highly endangered' in Namibia and is classified as Vulnerable in global terms, along with Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*. Cape, Lappet-faced and White-backed Vultures *Gyps africanus* have all suffered accelerating population declines in Namibia and may be at far greater risk than their current conservation status implies. The Waterberg Plateau is the only place in Namibia at which Cape Vultures occur. Many conservation efforts have been focused there, especially concerning this high-priority vulture. Clare Buckley, the team leader, and other members of the Oxford University team propose to travel to the Waterberg Plateau in Namibia to work with the local charity REST on vulture surveying, research and public awareness.

They also aim to undertake a population survey of the species and Lappet-faced Vulture, extending this to White-backed Vultures in the area. Through this, they hope to provide important population monitoring information, indicating the success of previous conservation efforts and providing information for other vulture conservation organisations. This will be especially useful as few data are currently available in Namibia regarding vulture status.

Working with already active local volunteers and visiting students from Windhoek University, the study will comprise a ground survey of soaring birds and vulture nesting/roosting sites, an aerial nesting survey of Lappet-faced and White-backed Vultures, as well as reoccurrence studies and minimum population calculations at feeding stations.

The expedition also aims to carry out a local publicity campaign promoting vulture-friendly practises. Through REST, the expedition members hope to work with people from the surrounding area, namely the two nearby communal Herero and Damara farming areas. This project will involve local schools, businesses and the media. Members hope to build enthusiasm for vulture conservation, which can be capitalised upon through further projects, as well as determine the views of local people regarding the conservation of vultures.

Stephanie Tyler

Further information...

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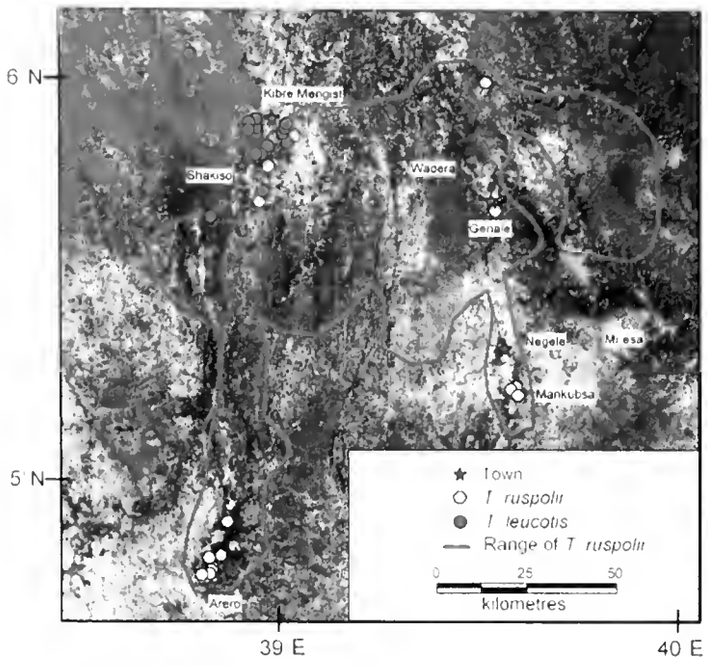

Figure 1

Figure 3

Figure 2

Figure 4

Figure 5

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A reassessment of the conservation status of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii*

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Réévaluation du statut de conservation du Touraco de Ruspoli *Tauraco ruspolii*. Le Touraco de Ruspoli *Tauraco ruspolii* est endémique à l'Ethiopie du sud, où son aire de distribution ne dépasse probablement pas les 8000 km^2. Bien que l'espèce y fut encore relativement commune en 1995, des travaux sur le terrain effectués en 2001 semblent indiquer que son statut de conservation était en train de se dégrader. En février 2003 les auteurs ont prospecté quatre localités (Negele, Genale, Kibre Mengist et Arero) à l'intérieur de son aire de distribution. Bien que le Touraco de Ruspoli était toujours présent dans chacune de ces localités, une dégradation alarmante de l'habitat a eu lieu depuis 1995. Dans le nord, l'expansion de l'agriculture est le problème majeur, tandis que dans le sud, le surpâturage et les feux de brousse sont les facteurs les plus préoccupants. La coupe illégale des arbres est répandue sur toute la zone prospectée, surtout près des agglomérations les plus importantes. Le Touraco à joues blanches *T. leucotis* semblait avoir étendu son aire de distribution, empiétant sur celui du Touraco de Ruspoli, et des hybrides des deux espèces semblent répandus dans les zones marginales. Les tentatives des autorités locales pour conserver les habitats forestiers ont largement échoué à cause d'un manque chronique de ressources. La région a un besoin urgent de mesures de conservation, mais la situation socio-économique actuelle n'y est pas favorable.

Summary. Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* is endemic to southern Ethiopia, where its range may be smaller than 8,000 km^2. Although the species was reported to be common in 1995, field work carried out in 2001 suggested that its conservation status might be worsening. In February 2003 we visited four localities (Negele, Genale, Kibre Mengist and Arero) within the species' range. Although Prince Ruspoli's Turaco was still present at all localities, a dramatic habitat degradation had taken place since 1995. Agricultural expansion was the main problem in the north of the area, whilst overgrazing and uncontrolled bushfires were more important in the south. Illegal felling of trees was widespread, especially near the largest human settlements. White-cheeked Turaco *T. leucotis* seemed to have expanded its range, encroaching upon that of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, and hybrids of the two species appeared to be widespread in edge areas. Attempts by local authorities to conserve forest habitats have largely failed due to chronic lack of resources. Conservation measures are urgently needed, but the present socio-economic situation is not favourable to the implementation of such measures.

Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* is endemic to a restricted area of southern Ethiopia (Borghesio & Massa 2000), where its total range is perhaps less than 8,000 km^2. Its very small range, the difficulties of accessing this remote area, the scarcity of information on its biology, and the history of its discovery, during an adventurous and ill-fated expedition in the late-19th century, all contribute to its charisma. Its discovery (Salvadori 1913) was not followed up until the 1940s, when Benson (1942) traced it again, to Arero Forest, near the border between Kenya and Ethiopia. Thereafter, for several decades, almost no further information was collected, although the species was considered close to the brink of extinction, because of its small population, ongoing habitat degradation and possible competition with White-cheeked Turaco *Tauraco leucotis* (Collar & Stuart 1985). More detailed surveys, in 1995 (Borghesio 1997a,b, Borghesio & Massa 2000), found that Prince Ruspoli's Turaco was still relatively common within its small range and that its preferred habitats were forest edge and relatively open *Acacia* woodland. Moreover, White-cheeked

Turaco mainly occurred in dense forest habitats, thus reducing competition between the two. Thus, Prince Ruspoli's Turaco was reclassified in a lower threat category (Vulnerable rather than Endangered) under IUCN criteria (BirdLife International 2000).

Field work in 2001 (Lernould & Seitre 2002) provided fresh information on the species' conservation status, suggesting that unexpected factors could threaten the bird and required evaluation. Photographic evidence from Kibre Mengist, at the western edge of the species' range, revealed that a significant proportion, if not the majority, of turacos in this area were hybrids between *T. ruspolii* and *T. leucotis*. Lernould & Seitre (2002) further suggested that habitat degradation in this area was responsible for reducing the barriers between the two species, thus permitting inter-breeding. Their observations appear to be the first report of natural hybrids between two species of turaco, and are of great concern, as they suggest that the genetic integrity of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco could be threatened by the introgression of genes of another species.

In February 2003 we visited the range of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco in order to reassess its conservation status.

Study area and methods

Our survey lasted from 12 to 23 February 2003, and covered various localities within the range of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco (Fig. 1). During the survey, conditions were mainly dry, and many of the trees leafless and without fruit.

On 12–13 February we visited Negele Borana, in the south-east of the species' range. The area is dominated by open grassland and sparse woodland, unsuitable for *ruspolii*. However, Prince Ruspoli's Turaco is known to occur in Mankubsa, a small forest formerly dominated by *Juniperus procera* and *Olea africana*. These tree species have now largely been removed by man, and small trees such as *Pistacia aethiopica* and *Euclea schimperi* are now much commoner (Borghesio 1997b, Borghesio & Massa 2000). We also visited Mi-esa, another locality *c.*30 km west of Negele, where other patches of *Juniperus* forest occur.

We next proceeded to Genale (13–15 March), another well-known locality for *ruspolii* (Borghesio 1997b, Borghesio & Massa 2000). Here, habitat is mainly riverine woodland (with *Ficus* spp.) and wide expanses of drier *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland.

Between 15 and 18 February we surveyed the area around Kibre Mengist. Here, the wetter climate supports forest where species such as *Podocarpus gracilior*, *Olea capensis* and *Aningeria adolfi-friedericii* are common. The forest gradually grades into *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland. Cultivation is also widespread, as the wetter climate favours agriculture. Both Prince Ruspoli's and White-cheeked Turaco occur here (the former mainly in the woodland, the latter usually in the forest: Borghesio 1997b). This area is where hybrid turacos were originally observed, *c.*25 km

Captions to figures on page 104

Figure 1. Satellite view (LANDSAT image of 01/2002) of the survey area and the estimated range of *T. ruspolii*, showing the localities mentioned in the text, and the observations of *T. ruspolii* and *T. leucotis* during the survey. Colours in the satellite image correspond to habitat types: red = wet forest (*Podocarpus–Aningeria*); black = *Juniperus* dry forest (mainly at Arero); blue-green = *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland.

Image de satellite LANDSAT (janvier 2002) de la zone prospectée et de l'aire de distribution estimée de *T. ruspolii*. Les localités mentionnées dans l'article et les observations de *T. ruspolii* et *T. leucotis* faites pendant la prospection sont indiquées. Les couleurs de l'image correspondent à des types d'habitats: rouge = forêt humide (*Podocarpus–Aningeria*); noir = forêt sèche de *Juniperus* (principalement à Arero); bleu-vert = zone de *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia*.

Figure 2. A former tract of *Juniperus–Olea* forest at Mankubsa, south of Negele. The trees have been totally removed (compare with Fig. 5).

Ancienne forêt de *Juniperus–Olea* à Mankubsa, au sud de Negele. Les arbres ont tous été coupés.

Figure 3. Genale, February 2003. Although agricultural intensification occurred between 1995 and 2003, Prince Ruspoli's Turaco is still present in the area.

Genale, février 2003. Malgré l'intensification de l'agriculture qui a eu lieu entre 1995 et 2003, le Touraco de Ruspoli est toujours présent dans la zone.

Figure 4. *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland south of Kibre Mengist; a mixed group of five *T. ruspolii* and *T. leucotis* was observed here on 17 February 2003.

Zone de *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* au sud de Kibre Mengist; un groupe mixte de cinq *T. ruspolii* et *T. leucotis* a été observé ici le 17 février 2003.

Figure 5. *Juniperus–Olea* forest at Arero.

Forêt de *Juniperus–Olea* à Arero.

west of Kibre Mengist (Lernould & Seitre 2002).

On 19–23 February we visited Arero Forest, where the principal habitat is *Juniperus procera–Olea europaea* forest (similar to that at Mankubsa), fringed by *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland. Only *ruspolii* is known to occur, often at high densities (Borghesio 1997b, Dellelegn 1991).

In each of these areas we searched for turacos using unlimited-distance point counts lasting 15 minutes. Points were located at 250 m distance from each other along approximately straight lines. The starting point and the direction of each line were located randomly within suitable habitats (i.e. grassland and dry *Acacia–Commiphora* woodland were avoided, as they are known to be unsuitable: Borghesio 1997b, Borghesio & Massa 2000). At each point we played recordings (supplied by the National Sound Archive of the British Library) of the song and calls of both *T. ruspolii* and *T. leucotis* in an attempt to elicit a response. The location of each point, as well as the distances between points, was recorded using a GPS.

In each area, we also interviewed local people and officers of the Rural Land Administration Department, in order to acquire information concerning perceived ecological problems and possible solutions. Throughout, the results of our 2003 survey are compared with those of previous (1995) work in the same localities (Borghesio 1997a,b, Borghesio & Massa 2000).

Results

Negele. We performed 35 point counts in this area, and found Prince Ruspoli's Turaco in three. All points where the species was observed were in the same area, a small valley with extremely degraded remnant *Juniperus* forest intermixed with *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland. At Mi-esa, we searched for turacos on one morning, but were unable to find any. However, the habitat appeared suitable for the species, and local people suggested its presence, at least seasonally. We recorded severe habitat degradation in the Negele area, especially in Mankubsa Forest (Fig. 2). Here, comparison of satellite imagery from 1986 and 2002 revealed a reduction of 39% in the forested area, from 12.5 to 7.6 km^2, and the remaining habitat was degraded to such an extent that it was difficult to define the area as forest, but rather dense brush with scattered trees (Borghesio *et al.* in press). Increased demand for wood in the large town of Negele is probably the main cause of this destruction. High grazing pressure of domestic animals (cows and goats) is also significant, and the effects of overgrazing are widespread, both in the forest and in the surrounding *Acacia* woodland, as testified by the much higher abundance of low thorny bushes (*A. drepanolobium*) in 2003 compared with 1995. *A. drepanolobium* is avoided by domestic herbivores and its increase is a well-known sign of excessive grazing pressure (Pratt & Gwynne 1977). Forest fires are also a conservation problem, and the most recent burn (in 2001) destroyed a large tract of forest (perhaps 2 km≈), *c.*8 km south of the town. According to local people, fires are usually started by pastoralists, in an attempt to create more grazing land and control the abundance of ticks. Agricultural areas have also increased, but only around Negele, as most other areas appear too dry to sustain cultivation.

The local Rural Land Department has endeavoured to tackle the shortage of wood in Negele by creating plantations of exotic species (especially *Leucaena leucocephala* and *Grevillea robusta*). However, these plantations have met with little success with local people, who prefer to cut native trees. Moreover, local authorities complain of a severe shortage of funds to manage the plantations effectively, e.g. by watering or pruning. As a result, seedlings have a low establishment rate, and trees are stunted and of low quality. It appears that pressure on natural habitats is steadily increasing. At both Mankubsa and Mi-esa the forests are criss-crossed by many tracks, permitting vehicle access to transport felled trees away from the sites. Moreover, large numbers of people travel on foot each day from the town to extract firewood. In sum, attempts to stem the destruction of natural forest have been largely unsuccessful at Negele. Although forests are protected, local authorities lack the funds and manpower to enforce existing legislation. Moreover, given that timber products are essential to local people, it is obvious that a ban on tree felling will prove impossible to implement, as it would have unbearable consequences on the local human population. As the supply of wood in Mankubsa is now almost exhausted, woodcutters are working more remote areas, such as Mi-esa, which are likely to be completely destroyed within a short period.

Genale. Twenty-five point counts were performed in this area, and Prince Ruspoli's Turaco was observed in only one (four individuals in a group). Additionally, another individual was recorded in a second area, 31 km north of Genale River. Both records were in *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland. Our data must be considered incomplete, as on the second day we were denied permission to continue our survey, because local authorities were suspicious that we were attempting to illegally capture turacos. These suspicions arose largely because, shortly before our visit, another party of 'white men' had endeavoured to capture turacos in the area. We were unable to verify if they had been successful. The situation was tense, and on the same day of our arrival, a party of tourists was denied permission to camp in the area.

Our general impression at Genale was that, compared with 1995, cultivation had increased somewhat, especially along the Genale River, but further away from there habitat appeared little changed. It seems likely that large areas of suitable habitat for the species are still present in the region (Fig. 3).

Kibre Mengist. Sixty-two point counts were made in this area, and *ruspolii* was found in three (one individual in cultivated landscape with remnants of *Podocarpus* forest, one at the edge of a *Podocarpus* forest and a mixed group of five (three *T. ruspolii* and two *T. leucotis*) in *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland (Fig. 4). One apparently hybrid *T. ruspolii* x *T. leucotis* was also observed in *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland on 16 February, *c.*10 km south of Kibre Mengist. At the latter, White-cheeked Turaco was apparently much commoner than Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, being abundant in plantations of exotic trees (*Eucalyptus* spp. and *Cupressus lusitanica*), where it was recorded on six point counts of a total of nine, as well as in *Podocarpus* forest (eight points of 45). White-cheeked Turaco also occurred in open, cultivated landscapes (one point of six). Compared with 1995, White-cheeked Turaco seemed to have expanded its range, especially into tree plantations, but also towards cultivated areas and *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland, where it was apparently absent at the time of the 1995 survey.

Human activity increased significantly in the Kibre Mengist area between 1995 and 2003. There was a general increase in the size of villages and towns, especially around Shakiso (*c.*15 km south of Kibre Mengist), where a mine has attracted large numbers of settlers in recent years. Cultivated areas and plantations of exotic trees had also expanded greatly, at the expense of both *Podocarpus* forest and *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland. Plantations probably already existed in 1995, as most trees were apparently 10–20 years old, but in 1995 they were much smaller and did not offer suitable habitat for turacos. However, in 2003 White-cheeked Turaco had invaded most such areas. Exotic trees were stunted and of low quality, as at Negele. The local Natural Resource Administration Department complained that no, or very few, resources were available for thinning, pruning and watering plantations. Apparently, local people showed very little interest in exploiting the timber products provided by plantations, and preferred to use native trees, despite felling being forbidden. Pit-sawing was common in wooded areas, and according to local authorities had greatly increased since the closure of government-owned sawmills.

Arero. Seventy point counts were made in this area, with *ruspolii* being recorded in ten, either as singles or in groups of up to nine. Only Prince Ruspoli's Turaco was observed, usually in narrow valleys at the edge of *Juniperus* forest, apparently in places with nearby water.

Compared to Mankubsa, forest loss at Arero was relatively less (Fig. 5). Comparison of satellite imagery (Borghesio *et al.* in press) from 1986 and 2002 showed a reduction in forest area of 8.7%, from 85 to 78 km^2. However, grazing pressure in 2002 was much higher than in 1995, which poses the question of how it will be possible to preserve the forest as it gradually ages. Large-scale commercial tree exploitation was absent, undoubtedly because of difficult road access, and trees were apparently only felled to satisfy the relatively low demands of local, nomadic tribes. Agricultural areas had expanded, but affected only a small area of the land, as traditional, nomadic cattle- and goat-herding remain the principal land-uses. The local Rural Land Department has created a small number of plantations, but again with little success due to lack of resources. There were traces of fires in many places, but at least up to now these seem to have affected only a minor area of forest.

Discussion

Our survey was short in duration, and we had no opportunity to visit core areas of *ruspolii*'s range, where presumably the species' strongholds occur. However, we were able to collect important new data, which suggest that the conservation status of the species might demand reassessment. In sum, the following issues appear relevant.

Range. Positively, we found no evidence that the range of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco contracted between 1995 and 2002. The species was still present in all localities searched. However, the extent of habitat degradation at Negele was such that the species is unlikely to persist there for long. Further research might locate new subpopulations of *ruspolii* in areas where lack of road access has thus far precluded exploration, especially at Mi-Esa, where some relatively intact *Juniperus* forest appears extant, and local people suggested that the species was present (although we failed to observe it).

Population trend. During our survey, contact rates with the species during point counts was very low, such that we were unable to derive population estimates from our data. The small number of observations might, in part, reflect the dry conditions during our survey, rather than a population decline. Prince Ruspoli's Turaco is known to make short-range seasonal movements (Borghesio 1997a), expanding into more peripheral areas in the wet season and retreating to its core range during dry periods. This, in turn, may result in a lower detection rate, as in the dry season the birds are more localised. However, we believe that seasonal shifts can only partially explain low detection rates, and that significant population decline might have occurred through habitat degradation. More field work is required and we suggest that counts should preferably be made during the wet season (April–May), when the species is more evenly distributed across its range.

Habitat changes. Compared with 1995, we found that human pressure had increased substantially. This had triggered high rates of habitat destruction. We found a noticeable difference in the quality and intensity of human activities between northern (Kibre Mengist) and southern parts of the study area. In the northern, more humid region, agriculture has probably driven most land-use change, as we found that many areas formerly occupied by natural habitats had been replaced by cultivated fields. In the drier southern part, the most noticeable changes were due to excessive grazing pressure, and perhaps to fires, which are mainly set by pastoralists. Also important is that all major urban areas had expanded across the study area, generating increased demand for firewood, construction poles, etc., which are mostly extracted, unsustainably, from natural woodland and forest. Finally, throughout the study area, but more noticeably in the north, we found that many plantations of exotic trees have been created recently. Unfortunately, they seem to have largely failed as a renewable source of timber products, mainly due to a scarcity of funds for their management. As a result, local people prefer felling trees in natural habitats, rather than using low-quality wood from plantations.

In sum, it appears that all types of forest (both *Juniperus*, in the south, and *Podocarpus*, in the north) are currently highly threatened and have shrunk rapidly in recent years. *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland, which is the most widespread habitat in the study area (Fig. 1), seems to have suffered least, and it is probable that reasonable expanses are still present, especially where road access is poor.

The effects of such changes on *ruspolii* are probably largely negative. In the south, the almost complete destruction of Mankubsa Forest has probably caused the species' local extirpation. At Arero, the situation is undoubtedly better, but the very low regeneration rate of forest trees (due to the destruction of saplings by grazing animals) obviously poses a future threat. In the north, steady reduction of *Podocarpus* forests probably poses only a minor threat to the species, as *ruspolii* is only rarely found in such habitat (Borghesio 1997b). Agricultural intensification is, however, also eroding *Acacia–Combretum–Terminalia* woodland, on which the species is dependent. Moreover, our data suggest that exotic tree plantations in the north have provided White-cheeked Turaco with a stepping stone to encroach the rarer species' habitat, thus increasing the risk of hybridisation and competition between the two.

Hybridisation with White-cheeked Turaco. During our survey we observed one hybrid *T. ruspolii* x *T. leucotis* in the Kibre Mengist area. It was

seen *c.*30 km west of the hybrid bird observed by Lernould & Seitre (2002). Although our data do not permit an estimation of the proportion of hybrids within the total population, they confirm that the occurrence of hybrids is widespread and that they can be expected to occur over most of the contact zone (i.e., a line running from Shakiso, in the north-west, to Wadera in the north-east). That no hybrids were observed during the 1995 survey does not prove that none existed then, as we unable to exclude the possibility of having missed such individuals. However, a new insight from the 2003 survey was that White-cheeked Turaco had apparently expanded into the range of *ruspolii*, occupying some cultivated areas and exotic tree plantations in the Kibre Mengist area, where we also observed a mixed flock of the two species. Such flocks were not recorded in 1995, despite the relatively long period of time spent in the area, supporting the hypothesis of Lernould & Seitre (2002) that habitat changes have lowered ecological barriers between these turacos, thereby increasing the chances of hybridisation and competition.

Illegal smuggling. During our survey we collected evidence of attempts to illegally capture Prince Ruspoli's Turacos, suggesting that this might be an increasing threat to the species. Access to the area is still difficult, but has improved in recent years and, although this could result in increased possibilities for ecotourism, it will also provide additional opportunities for illegal trade in adults and eggs. It is impossible to evaluate the magnitude of this threat, but the issue should be taken into account during future surveys.

Possible conservation measures. Given the present rapidly deteriorating situation, urgent measures appear to be required to improve the conservation status of *ruspolii* and that of the entire South Ethiopian highlands Endemic Bird Area, where four other threatened endemic bird species occur (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998). We believe that the different socio-economic conditions in the southern and the northern parts of the study area demand separate approaches be taken. In the south, where the main economic activity is nomadic pastoralism, more emphasis should be placed on lowering grazing pressure, especially within *Juniperus* forests. In the north, attempts would better focus on reducing agricultural encroachment on natural habitats.

Given increasing demand for timber products in the area, establishing new tree plantations also seems to be a high priority, but more resources need to be allocated to post-planting management (pruning, watering, thinning etc), and, rather than exotic species, more emphasis should be attached to reforestation using indigenous trees. These measures are necessary if tree plantations are to be accepted by local people as a timber source. However, more research is needed to better understand how tree plantations favour the expansion of White-cheeked Turaco into *ruspolii*'s range. Firewood use is certainly a main cause of habitat destruction throughout the survey area. It has been demonstrated (Habermehl 1999) that high-efficiency stoves, which are cheap and easy to construct, can substantially lower amounts of firewood used, and the introduction of such devices would seem to be another important priority. However, these stoves could only interest people living in larger towns, because they are the only ones who need to buy firewood (and possess sufficient money to pay for it). It is likely that such people would quickly realise the savings inherent in using high-efficiency stoves. On the other hand, for a large part of the human population, firewood is free of cost, as they simply need to collect it from the nearest forest. At present, it is unlikely that high-efficiency stoves could spread to poorer people, who live far from towns and have no economic benefit to gain, as they simply do not possess the economic resources required.

We believe that the implementation of conservation strategies in southern Ethiopia will be challenging, because present levels of poverty in the area mean that any attempt to conserve the environment by applying existing legislation will fail. Moreover, as exploitation of natural resources is presently the only source of income for many people, it is unclear how plausible (or moral) it would be to prevent local people from continuing to use natural habitats, even unsustainably.

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Does hybridisation with White-cheeked Turaco *Tauraco leucotis* represent a threat for Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *T. ruspolii*?

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L'hybridation avec le Touraco à joues blanches *Tauraco leucotis* représente-t-elle une menace pour le Touraco du Prince Ruspoli *T. ruspolii*? Des hybrides entre ces deux espèces ont été photographiés en 2001 dans la zone de contact de leurs distributions géographiques. La progression depuis une cinquantaine d'années de nos connaissances sur *T. ruspolii* et sur son rapport avec *T. leucotis* est présentée. L'hybridation est très probablement un phénomène récent, engendré par une dégradation des habitats due au développement des activités agricoles. Cette transformation du milieu naturel rompt l'isolement reproducteur entre les deux espèces qui ne semble assuré que par une barrière écologique. La menace que représente l'hybridation pour la conservation de *T. ruspolii* est discutée. Les ornithologues visitant l'Ethiopie sont invités à participer par leurs observations à une meilleure compréhension du problème.

Photographs of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* taken by RS in southern Ethiopia in February 2001, at a site where this species and White-cheeked Turaco *T. leucotis* are in contact, proved that at least four birds were hybrids between the two species. This is apparently the first documented case of hybridisation between turacos in the wild (Lernould & Seitre 2002).

This discovery raises two questions: (1) is hybridisation between these species a recent event or does a natural hybridisation zone exist that has escaped the attention of observers until now?, and (2) what are the consequences of this finding for the conservation of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco?

Conservation status of *T. ruspolii*

Moreau (1958) considered *T. ruspolii* a relict species related to *T. leucotis*, and confined to a single locality, although he admitted that it could occur elsewhere in the zoologically largely unexplored south-eastern Ethiopian highlands. He believed that its peculiarities are such that it was probably reproductively isolated. However, he considered it also possible that *ruspolii*, if allopatric with either of the two subspecies of *leucotis*, could be conspecific with the latter species. Moreau also expressed the hypothesis that the isolation of *T. ruspolii* in a small region could be a consequence of pressure due to the expansion of *T. leucotis* in response to past climatic changes.

In 1968, Erard & Prévost (1970, 1971) discovered *T. ruspolii* near Wadera, a town *c.*120 km north-northeast of Arero, the only locality from where the species was then known. They noticed that it was sympatric with *T. l. leucotis* but that the two species occurred in different habitats. This proved that *T. ruspolii*'s range was larger than previously thought and that it was not conspecific with *T. leucotis*.

Collar & Stuart (1985) stated that, although records in 1968–73 established that the species was commoner than previous evidence had suggested, information was still too scant to allow confidence concerning its overall abundance. They considered that the species was at risk through habitat alteration linked to possible resettlement schemes. They also followed Moreau (1958) and Erard & Prévost (1970) in thinking that the species was apparently relict and had suffered in competition with *T. leucotis*. They finally remarked that, where the two species are sympatric, *T. ruspolii* may very gradually be in decline and will ultimately become extinct from natural causes. According to the IUCN Red Data Book categories of threat of that time, they classified *T. ruspolii* as Rare: taxon with small world population that is not at present Endangered or Vulnerable, but at risk (because of range restriction in this case). In 1994, following changes in the IUCN criteria, *T. ruspolii* was reclassified as Endangered (Collar *et al.* 1994). As field work subsequently found the species to be more common and widespread than previously thought (Borghesio 1997a,b), it has been downlisted to Vulnerable (BirdLife 2000, 2004).

Borghesio's (1997a,b) long and detailed field work in 1995 brought new data about *T. ruspolii* and its relation with *T. leucotis*. His conclusions can be summarised as follows. The two Ethiopian turacos are largely separated by habitat in areas where they are in contact. They replace each other with little or no overlap. Since their habitat overlap is restricted, the hypothesis of a strong interaction between the two species no longer seems valid. This is reinforced by the fact that, in sympatry, *T. leucotis* occupies a more restricted range of habitats than it does in allopatry. Therefore, competition is not likely to be a severe threat for *T. ruspolii*, which seems to be better adapted than its relative to its non-forest habitat. Prince Ruspoli's Turaco should not be considered a gradually disappearing relict as was supposed by former authors. The preferred habitats of *T. ruspolii*, owing to their dryness, are subject to much lower pressure from human populations than higher and more humid habitats. Consequently, Borghesio suggested that *T. ruspolii*'s conservation status was probably less severe than previously thought.

Possible cause of hybridisation

Following our discovery of hybrids (Lernould & Seitre 2002), Borghesio decided to visit the range of *T. ruspolii* again in order to reassess its conservation status (Borghesio *et al.* 2004). During this survey, one hybrid was observed in an area 30 km west of the locality where the photos were taken. Considering that Borghesio observed a large number of turacos of both species but did not notice any hybrids during his almost 2.5 months in the field in 1995 (although he admits he could have missed them), and that his team searched specifically for hybrids during the 2003 survey but found only one, we suppose that hybridisation is a recent phenomenon and that there is no natural hybrid zone where the two turacos came into contact.

In Gabon, Green Turaco *T. persa* and Yellow-billed Turaco *T. macrorhynchus* coexist through habitat separation and strong interspecific territorial exclusion where they come into contact (Decoux & Erard 1988). In the same paper, Erard mentioned also having observed aggressive behaviour between *T. leucotis* and *T. ruspolii*. Observations in aviaries confirm the strong intra- and interspecific territoriality of turacos, but also demonstrate that hybrids can easily result and, in one case that we know, are fertile (Lernould & Seitre 2002). In fact, turacos of the Musophaginae not only share the typical and striking red flight feathers but they have also a very homogenous social behaviour (JML pers. obs.). Therefore, we suppose that the reproductive isolation between sympatric Musophaginae species is achieved by ecological barriers rather than by genetic or behavioural barriers.

Borghesio *et al.* (2004) made two most important observations in 2003. They noticed that, since 1995, White-cheeked Turaco had apparently expanded its range into that of Prince Ruspoli's by occupying cultivated areas and exotic trees plantations in the Kibre Mengist area, and that groups comprising both species could now be observed. Their conclusions confirmed ours (Lernould & Seitre 2002): that habitat changes have probably deteriorated the ecological barrier between the two species, thereby increasing the likelihood of hybridisation and competition.

Discussion

Moreau (1958) considered that White-cheeked and Prince Ruspoli's Turacos have a common ancestor, grouping them with Hartlaub's Turaco *T. hartlaubi* in a superspecies. Erard & Prévost (1971) expressed the same opinion. However, the phylogenetic study by Véron (1999) of the turacos, based on an analysis of morphological characters, does not support this hypothesis: *T. ruspolii* represents a much earlier branch than *T. leucotis*, with a number of species separating them. Although the Ethiopian turacos appear identical in general coloration, this is probably not a significant character in considering their inter-relatedness, as e.g. *T. persa* and *T. macrorhynchus* also have similar body coloration. Head patterns are clearly a better indication of the degree of relatedness between species of turacos and it is evident, in this respect, that *T. ruspolii* and *T. leucotis* are not close to each other, having no head ornamentation in common.

It is unfortunate that the genetic study of Véron & Winney (2000) did not include *T. ruspolii*. Among their findings, it initially appears strange that *T. hartlaubi* should fall within the *T. persa* superspecies, an association that has not been suggested previously. However, although *hartlaubi* has a different type of crest, it shares the white spot and line with all species of the *persa* group. Is it this proximity of *T. hartlaubi* to *T. persa* that

Figures 1–2. Hybrid Prince Ruspoli's *Tauraco ruspolii* x White-cheeked Turaco *T. leucotis* (Roland Seitre)
Hybride entre le Touraco du Prince Ruspoli *Tauraco ruspolii* et le Touraco à joues blanches *T. leucotis* (Roland Seitre)
Figure 3. White-cheeked Turaco / Touraco à joues blanches *Tauraco leucotis* (Jean-Marc Lernould)
Figures 4–9. Prince Ruspoli's Turaco / Touraco du Prince Ruspoli *Tauraco ruspolii* (Jean-Marc Lernould)


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explains the existence of fertile hybrids, born in aviary, between them? Can we expect hybrids between *T. ruspolii* and *T. leucotis* to be sterile if these species are genetically sufficiently different? It is currently impossible to answer such questions, unless birds are captured for experimental breeding or a successful nest with at least one hybrid parent is found. The threat of hybridisation is much more complicated to tackle than hunting or habitat destruction, and could pose a real challenge for the conservation of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco.

Conclusion

It is probably too early to discuss the conservation issue further, as more information concerning the extent of hybridisation is required. A prolonged field study is needed to estimate the extent of the problem. However, birdwatchers visiting Ethiopia can contribute by paying special attention to the turacos they observe in the contact zone and providing detailed information concerning any observed hybrids. As is evident from the photos (probably of first-generation cross), hybrids are truly intermediate between the parent species and are easily identified.

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Some remarks on the taxonomy of Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus*, with particular reference to *C. n. jonesi* Ogilvie-Grant & Forbes, 1899

Guy M. Kirwan

Quelques remarques sur la taxonomie de l'Engoulevent de Nubie *Caprimulgus nubicus*, notamment en ce qui concerne *C. n. jonesi* Ogilvie-Grant & Forbes, 1899. Beaucoup a été publié sur les cinq sous-espèces de l'Engoulevent de Nubie *Caprimulgus nubicus*, dont l'aire de distribution s'étend du sud d'Israel à travers l'Arabie occidentale et le nord-est de l'Afrique jusqu'au Kénya, avec une population isolée à Socotra, Yemen. Des observations, enregistrements vocaux et photos récentes de cette dernière population, décrite comme *C. n. jonesi* à la fin du 19ème siècle sur la base d'un unique spécimen, permettent de réexaminer le statut taxonomique de cette forme. Puisque les caractéristiques utilisées pour distinguer *jonesi* de *C. n. torridus*, la forme occupant l'Afrique du nord-est avoisinante, se chevauchent, la présente note propose de considérer *jonesi* dorénavant comme un synonyme plus récent de *torridus*. Même entre les autres formes, les différences géographiques sont généralement assez faibles, et des opinions divergentes sur la façon de diagnostiquer les taxons ont été publiées. Le problème de la définition des limites des sous-espèces est aggravé par le manque de spécimens dans les musées d'au moins deux des formes, *taruensis* (occupant la Somalie du sud et le Kénya) et la forme nominale *nubicus* (du Soudan et l'extrême sud-est de l'Egypte). Les vocalisations des cinq taxons ne présentent apparemment pas de différences et les mouvements, mal connus, d'au moins deux d'entre eux, semblent indiquer que certains taxons se chevauchent dans une mesure plus ou moins large. L'auteur propose de considérer la plupart des variations dans le plumage de l'Engoulevent de Nubie comme des adaptations (parfois très localisées) aux conditions climatiques et à la nature du sol, et par conséquent (sous réserve d'études futures) ces variations sont peu utiles pour la détermination de divergences évolutives significatives et ne méritent donc pas de reconnaissance taxonomique. Malgré la relative absence de spécimens, l'auteur appuie l'avis exprimé dans la littérature que *taruensis* est un synonyme plus récent de *torridus* et recommande des études supplémentaires afin d'établir si *tamaricis* est véritablement distinct de *nubicus* et si *torridus* peut être distingué avec certitude de *tamaricis*. Pour des taxons nocturnes comme ceux-ci, les vocalisations doivent jouer un rôle primordial dans les études taxonomiques.

Summary. Much has been published on the five subspecies of the Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus*, which range from southern Israel through western Arabia and north-east Africa south to Kenya, with an outlying population on Socotra (Yemen). Recent field observations, tape-recordings and photographs of the latter population, described as *C. n. jonesi* in the late-19th century on the basis of a single specimen, have permitted a reanalysis of the taxonomic status of this form. Because of overlap in features used to distinguish *jonesi* with those of *C. n. torridus*, from adjacent north-east Africa, I propose that *jonesi* be henceforth regarded as a junior synonym of *torridus*. Geographical variation within the other forms of *C. nubicus* is also generally rather weakly expressed, with several differences in opinion as to how taxa might be diagnosed having been suggested in the previous literature. The problems of assigning subspecific limits within this species is compounded by a lack of specimen material in the world's museums of at least two of these forms, *taruensis* (from southern Somalia and Kenya) and nominate *nubicus* (Sudan and extreme south-east Egypt). No differences in vocalisations between the five taxa are known and the movements of at least two, which are poorly understood, may mean that some taxa overlap to a greater or lesser extent. I suggest that most described variation in the Nubian Nightjar might be considered as (sometimes highly localised) responses to climatic and soil conditions, and, subject to future research, therefore of little use in determining significant evolutionary divergence and hence

unworthy of taxonomic recognition. Despite the relative lack of specimen material, I support previous suggestions in the literature that *taruensis* is a junior synonym of *torridus*, and recommend that further work be carried out to determine whether *tamaricis* is definitely distinct from *nubicus* and whether *torridus* is safely distinguishable from *tamaricis*. In these and similar nocturnal taxa, vocalisations must assume a prominent role in taxonomic studies.

Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus* Lichtenstein, 1823, is a polytypic species known from the extreme southern Levant, western Arabia and north-east Africa, with seemingly anomalous records of unstated provenance from the Algerian/Libyan/Niger border region (Fry & Harwin 1988) and from Merzouga, southern Morocco, in spring 1984 (two sight records), although the latter are now considered unacceptable (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). Five taxa have been described: nominate *nubicus* from the Nile Valley of central Sudan and Gebel Elba, Egypt; *C. n. tamaricis* Tristram, 1864, from Israel (where it is now very rare), Jordan (only three definite records, all in 1963) and south-west Arabia, with some, at least, moving across the Red Sea to winter from south-east Egypt southwards; *C. n. torridus* Lort Phillips, 1898, from northern Somalia, central Ethiopia and north-west Kenya; *C. n. taruensis* van Someren, 1919, from southern Somalia and central and eastern Kenya (where it is perhaps only a non-breeding visitor); and *C. n. jonesi* Ogilvie-Grant & Forbes, 1899, from Socotra Island (Andrews 1995, Cleere & Nurney 1998, Holyoak 2001, Lewis & Pomeroy 1989, Shirihai 1996, Zimmerman *et al.* 1996). There is no available evidence to suggest that the range of *tamaricis* is continuous along the eastern border of the Red Sea, as mapped by Cleere & Nurney (1998), in discrepancy with the text in the same work and Jennings (1995). Despite several recent overviews of the Caprimulgiformes (e.g. Cleere & Nurney 1998, Cleere 1999, Holyoak 2001), the authors of these works have generally been content to uphold the taxonomic *status quo* with respect to *C. nubicus*. The purpose of the following note is, particularly, to question the validity of *C. n. jonesi* and, more generally, to provide comments concerning the perceived diagnosability of the other subspecies.

The validity of *Caprimulgus nubicus jonesi*

Caprimulgus jonesi was described (as a new species) by Ogilvie-Grant & Forbes (1899) on the basis of an adult male taken in the 'Dimichiro Valley, Garieh Plain, E. Sokotra' on 16 January 1899. Thereafter, *C. n. jonesi* went unrecorded for almost a century, with the exception of sight records of unidentified nightjars in 1953 and March 1964 (Kirwan 1998), until it was seen, photographed and heard singing by R. F. Porter, S. Aspinall *et al.* during biodiversity surveys of the archipelago in the late 1990s. In addition, a road-killed example of this species was salvaged by the same observers north of Rookib, on 20 February 2000, and is now in the Natural History Museum, Tring (NHM), collection (but awaits a registration number). However, the specimen is in such bad condition that it has, unfortunately, extremely limited value as comparative material. The temporal status on Socotra is unclear because ornithological field work on the island is concentrated in the boreal autumn to spring, and the records are as yet too few to gain a true impression of this, but it is presumed to be resident and to breed on the island (Porter 2003). It is unclear whether Ogilvie-Grant and Forbes had opportunity to compare their specimen with *torridus*, which was named the previous year (Phillips 1898), but they described the novelty as follows:

> Nearest to *C. nubicus* from Arabia, Palestine, and North-east Africa, but at once distinguished by having the ground colour of the upper parts clear grey instead of sandy brown, and the markings on the top of the head and on the scapulars rufous and buff instead of whitish buff. The whole of the black markings on the upper parts are moreover, much coarser.

As is obvious from the photographs (Figs. 1–3) presented here, *jonesi* actually shares all of these 'distinguishing features' with *torridus*. Subsequent commentators have thus refined the characters that separate *jonesi* as follows. Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1952) considered it greyer than *torridus* with a distinct collar. Fry & Harwin (1988) considered *jonesi* to be like *torridus* but greyer, with a narrower half-collar, a diagnosis copied verbatim by Holyoak (2001). Cleere & Nurney (1998), however, regarded the differences from *torridus* to be the 'smaller tawny spotting on the scapulars and no heavy buff spotting on the wing-coverts.' Like

the latter, I consider the type specimen of *jonesi* (NHM 1899.8.11.98), which is, apart from the wing of the road-killed example (see above), the only specimen material available for this taxon, to have both the ground colour of the upperparts and the depth of the buff-coloured half-collar closely comparable with a typical example of *torridus* depicted here (Fig. 2, from Balad or Balcad, southern Somalia, NHM 1982.3.53). Furthermore, the field photograph of *jonesi* obtained by S. Aspinall (Fig. 3) demonstrates that this form can possess quite marked buff spotting on the wing-coverts, and considerably more noticeable tawny-coloured scapular spotting than evident on the type. There may be a slight tendency for *torridus* to exhibit a more buff ground colour to the belly, and perhaps marginally more russet transverse barring to the same feather tract, but neither feature is necessarily constant and, as pointed out above, only the type specimen of *jonesi* is available as comparison. Even if proved to consistently differ from *jonesi* in such respects, nomenclatural recognition of the latter remains dubious. It should be remarked that available mensural data (wing and tail) for *jonesi* are within the range presented for *torridus*, although as noted by Holyoak (2001), those data for the latter form presented by Vaurie (1960) and Cleere & Nurney (1998) are at odds with those given by Fry & Harwin (1988). (The wing of the bird found dead on the road near Rookib, Socotra, measured 149 mm, and thus also within the range of *torridus*.) More importantly, the voice of *jonesi* reportedly does not differ from the typical double- or treble-noted song, slightly reminiscent of a distant yapping dog, given in Arabia (R. F. Porter, S. Aspinall pers. obs.), and apparently elsewhere in the species' range (see below). Given these data, it seems impossible to continue to recognise *jonesi*, and I recommend that the name be henceforth treated as a junior synonym of *torridus*. Considering the obviously close zoogeographical affinities between the Socotran archipelago and the Horn of Africa, such a finding is unsurprising.

Remarks on other subspecies

It is as well to provide some further remarks on the validity of the other named forms, based on a comparison of the following material in NHM: 28 *C. n. tamaricis*, 14 *C. n. torridus*, two *C. n. nubicus* and one *C. n. taruensis*, with an additional specimen of the latter held in the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren (RMCA), being examined on my behalf by R. Demey, and photographs of the holotype, held at the American Museum of Natural History, New York (AMNH) being supplied by S. Kenney. Further, S. Kenney provided me with representative photographs of a male specimen of *C. n. nubicus* (AMNH 633069, taken in Nubia, on 29 February 1904, and part of the Rothschild, Henley and Wollaston Collection) held at the same institution, which is apparently entirely typical of the series of nine specimens (six male) held in New York. In addition, I consulted the available literature, field photographs from Ethiopia, Israel, Kenya, Yemen and Gebel Elba, south-east Egypt (the latter posted at www.Birdingegypt.com), and my own field notes from Yemen. I omitted from my analysis eight specimens of *tamaricis* from Arabia taken by Meinertzhagen in the light of widespread doubts concerning the provenance of his material (see, e.g. Rasmussen & Prŷs-Jones 2003), although in the case of the present material a cursory examination did not suggest that the specimens might be fraudulent or in any other way problematic, and these all show the grey upperparts characteristic of this form. Given the ready availability of other material relating to this form, inclusion of potentially 'difficult' material was unnecessary. It is worth remarking on the comparative lack of specimen material available for some of these forms, which has also hampered previous commentators. The tiny sample sizes of *nubicus* and *taruensis* (as well as *jonesi*) make it difficult to provide in-depth commentaries on the validity of these taxa, but must also seriously call into question the ability of scientists to recognise and name them.

C. n. taruensis was described on the basis of ten specimens from the Taru desert to east Kilimanjaro, Kenya, by van Someren (1919), who considered it to differ from *torridus* in 'being more rufous on the wings and scapulars, and...smaller' (wing 146–150 mm compared to 152–157 mm; van Someren 1919). Although *taruensis* was considered a synonym of *torridus* by Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1952), who failed to provide rationale for their views, this position was refuted by Vaurie (1960) on the basis of the darker and more chestnut wing spots and perhaps smaller size (although sample size was again tiny and measurements were, by now, known to overlap with *taruensis*). As a result, *taruensis* has been considered valid by many

subsequent commentators, except Zimmerman *et al.* (1996), Cleere & Nurney (1998) and Cleere (1999), who again treated the name as a synonym of *torridus*, albeit without providing further evidence. Nonetheless, as noted by Holyoak (2001), published accounts of the distinctiveness of *taruensis* are at variance (Cramp 1985, Fry & Harwin 1988, Vaurie 1960). Like Cleere (1998, 1999), I do not find *taruensis* easily diagnosable and strongly uphold his view that it should be considered a junior synonym of *torridus*. The intensity of the rufous wing-covert spotting is very similar in *taruensis* and *torridus* (not appreciably darker and more chestnut in the former as claimed by Vaurie 1960), the one specimen of *taruensis* directly examined by myself was not paler grey than many of the *torridus* at NHM, neither is the half-collar brighter or broader in *taruensis* (both suggested by Fry & Harwin 1988 as valid differences). The field photograph presented here (Fig. 7) seems to confirm my views. That examined by R. Demey is a male and one of the paratypes of *taruensis* (RMCA 97594), collected by van Someren at Tsavo. According to RD the specimen closely matches the description by Fry & Harwin (1988) of either *torridus* or *taruensis*, except that it has a buffish-rufous upper breast-band between the white throat spots and the finely vermiculated breast (being a continuation of the nuchal collar but somewhat broader). The wing is 151 mm (i.e. well within the range of either race). The holotype (AMNH 633076, a male, from Tsavo, on 17 March 1918) is, in my opinion, equally difficult to differentiate from specimens of *torridus*. To confuse the issue further, Roselaar (in Cramp 1985) considered *taruensis* to have *paler* (my emphasis) rufous spotting than *torridus*, which merely proves how variable such features are in series. Zimmerman *et al.* (1996) mentioned rufous and dark morphs in *torridus*, of which the former is characterised by having 'most spots on wing-coverts deeper rufous', as well as being tinged cinnamon-rufous virtually throughout (and some of those held in NHM conform to this idea, see Figs. 11–12, although this might easily reflect a response to local soil conditions). Furthermore, mensural data (wing and tail) for the three *taruensis* examined by Vaurie (1960) are well within the range of *torridus* presented by Fry & Harwin (1988) and Cleere & Nurney (1998), and Zimmerman *et al.* (1996) also noted that this was the case.

The forms *tamaricis* and *nubicus* generally appear more easily diagnosable, but even here there is some disagreement in the literature. Thus, Holyoak (2001) found *nubicus* to have the 'upperparts and breast rufous-sandy, collar on hind-neck less conspicuous, spots on scapulars and wing-coverts larger, pink-cinnamon', a description with which both Cleere & Nurney (1998) and myself largely concur, although I do not consider the collar to be always less noticeable or narrower, and the latter authors also considered it to be 'broad'. Nonetheless, in some specimens (e.g. AMNH 633069), the collar is very restricted and poorly defined, agreeing with Fry & Harwin (1988), who described the collar as being much less obvious and who noted that the crown streaking is rather long and thin. However, as realised by Cleere & Nurney (1998), the latter might be equally stated to be a feature of *torridus*, albeit subject to variation, as some *torridus* exhibit almost no crown streaking (NHM 1923.8.7.4970, 1923.8.7.4972). Unlike Fry & Harwin (1988), I do not consider the spotting on the scapulars and wing-coverts of *C. n. nubicus* to be invariably less distinct than in *torridus*, but my small sample size must be borne in mind and in some instances (e.g. AMNH 633069) the differences can be striking. Finally, most specimens of this taxon in AMNH exhibit similar ground coloration, which is quite distinctly paler and sandier than *torridus* and other forms (see Fig. 4; S. Kenney *in litt.* 2004).

Fry & Harwin (1988) simply considered *tamaricis* to be 'greyer, less buffy' than *nubicus*, Cleere & Nurney (1998) thought it to be greyer than the nominate with the white tips to the outer tail feathers larger, and Holyoak (2001) found *tamaricis* to be much greyer and more heavily marked with black on the upperparts and breast, with contrasting large spots of chestnut or rufous-cinnamon on the crown, scapulars, wing-coverts and breast. There is some variation in most of these purported features. Some *tamaricis* at least (NHM 1896.2.18.14, 1948.58.23) can have a noticeably buffish breast, approaching *nubicus*, although the upperparts remain predominantly grey, not sandy as in *nubicus*. The spotting is consistently large and extensive on the scapulars and wing-coverts, but highly variable on the crown and breast, ranging from virtually none on either surface (e.g. NHM 1969.46.19) to rather extensive, being occasionally very densely spotted on the underparts (NHM

1948.58.23), although the majority might be considered intermediate in this feature. Thus, on the basis of dorsal colour alone *tamaricis* might prove diagnosable, but this is still dependent on examination of a larger series of *nubicus* than has thus far been available to museum workers, to prove that the upperparts are consistently sandy rather than grey. The evidence of the photograph taken by Gabriel Michael in November 2001 at Wadi Aideib, Gebel Elba, Egypt, suggests that some *nubicus* can be rather grey on the upperparts (see www.Birdingegypt.com). Equally, that *nubicus* is the only form present in south-east Egypt rests on the evidence of one specimen (see Goodman & Meininger 1989), and it seems plausible that *tamaricis* might also be present in this area in winter (see Movements). All of those I have observed in Yemen are rather grey dorsally, suggesting that *tamaricis* might be rather uniform in this feature. Additional specimens of *nubicus* are required to validate the potential difference in dorsal coloration. In sum, despite a relative lack of specimen material, I support previous suggestions in the literature that *taruensis* is a junior synonym of *torridus*, and postulate that further work is required to determine whether *tamaricis* is demonstrably distinct from *nubicus*.

Like *tamaricis*, *torridus* is a rather grey form. That the two are unequivocally distinct appears unclear on the evidence of those skins I have examined, especially given the presence of an apparent intermediate (see below). Further museum and field work is necessary on this issue.

Movements

Whilst most forms are considered to be resident, *tamaricis* is at least a partial migrant. Most of the, now tiny, population in Israel are probably summer visitors (Shirihai 1996) and there is quite some evidence of Arabian birds moving across the Red Sea to winter in Africa (Ash & Miskell 1998, Cramp 1985, Fry & Harwin 1988), whilst presumed migrants have been recorded in Oman in autumn (Eriksen & Sargeant 2000, NHM 1977.1.4, 1977.21.15), at which season there is also a claim from the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia (Bundy *et al.* 1989). My search of the relevant published and some unpublished literature, and specimens, revealed very few Arabian records in November–January (e.g. Brooks *et al.* 1987), although it is unquestionably true that the species is likely to be distinctly less obvious during the non-breeding season (i.e. when not singing). Nevertheless, *tamaricis* certainly reaches some parts of the range of *torridus* in winter and perhaps even that of nominate *nubicus*. A male, taken by K. D. Smith near Archico, Eritrea, on 17 May 1953, and held at NHM (1953.35.9; Figs. 9–10) appears intermediate between *torridus* and *tamaricis* (as already observed by N. Cleere in a note in the collection), having white tips to the outer two tail feathers larger than in *torridus* but smaller than in *tamaricis* and rufous spotting on the upperparts

Captions to figures on pages 122 & 123

Figure 1. Type specimen of / Spécimen type de *Caprimulgus nubicus jonesi* (Guy M. Kirwan). Copyright The Natural History Museum

Figure 2. Type specimen of *C. n. jonesi* (left) and specimen of *C. n. torridus*, from Balad or Balcad, southern Somalia (Guy M. Kirwan). Copyright The Natural History Museum

Spécimen type de *C. n. jonesi* (à gauche) et spécimen de *C. n. torridus*, de Balad ou Balcad, Somalie du sud (Guy M. Kirwan). Copyright The Natural History Museum

Figure 3. *C. n. jonesi*, Socotra (Simon Aspinall)

Figure 4. Specimen / spécimen AMNH 633069 of / de *C. n. nubicus* (Shannon Kenney, courtesy of The American Museum of Natural History, Department of Ornithology)

Figures 5–6. *C. n. torridus*, Nechisar National Park, Ethiopia, 19 February 1997 (Per Smitterberg)

C. n. torridus, Parc national de Nechisar, Ethiopie, 19 février 1997 (Per Smitterberg)

Figure 7. *C. n. taruensis*, Lake Baringo, Kenya, July 2003 (Marc Guyt/AGAMI Photo Agency)

C. n. taruensis, Lac Baringo, Kénya, juillet 2003 (Marc Guyt/AGAMI Photo Agency)

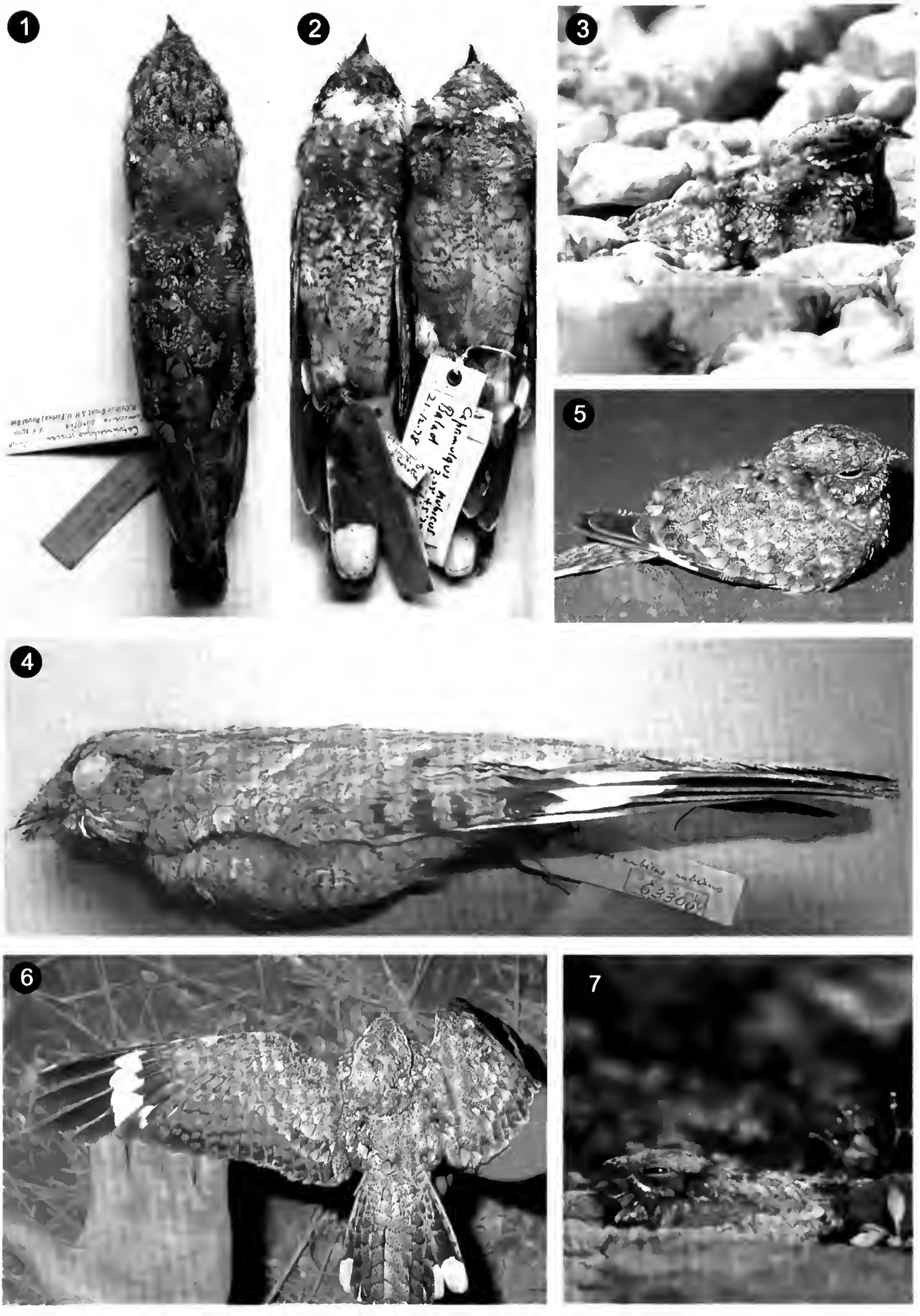
Figure 8. Specimens of / spécimens de *C. n. nubicus* (Guy M. Kirwan). Copyright The Natural History Museum

Figures 9–10. Apparent intermediate between *C. n. torridus* and *C. n. tamaricis* (Guy M. Kirwan). Copyright The Natural History Museum

Spécimen apparemment intermédiaire entre *C. n. torridus* et *C. n. tamaricis* (Guy M. Kirwan). Copyright The Natural History Museum

Figures 11–12. Two specimens of *C. n. torridus* (extreme left and right) flanking a *C. n. taruensis* (Guy M. Kirwan). Copyright The Natural History Museum. The bird on the left appears to be an example of the so-called rufous morph.

Deux spécimens de *C. n. torridus* (à gauche et à droite) avec un *C. n. taruensis* (au centre). L'oiseau de gauche semble appartenir à la forme dite rousse.



Captions are on page 121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and wings perhaps intermediate between the two forms.

In addition, the breeding range and migratory status of *taruensis* are very poorly known, because as noted by both Lewis & Pomeroy (1989) and Zimmerman *et al.* (1996) there is very little evidence that it breeds in Kenya (the bulk of its purported range), and no definite information that it does so in southern Somalia, where it is generally considered to only occur south of 04°30'N (Ash & Miskell 1998). The possibility that *taruensis* and *torridus* overlap, perhaps even quite significantly, in their breeding ranges, which does not appear to have been suggested before, needs to be investigated and might assist explaining the degree of plumage overlap between the two taxa and, hence, the degree of difficulty that ornithologists have encountered in trying to delimit characters for their separation. Similarly, it is not impossible that some *jonesi* are breeding migrants to Socotra and also reach the range of *torridus* in their non-breeding period. Finally, the records in the central and western Sahara are anomalous and, if correct, presumably refer to vagrants or wandering birds.

Vocalisations

Seemingly, there are rather few recordings of Nubian Nightjar in existence, although the species is featured on Ranft & Cleere (1998), with a recording from Saudi Arabia (B. King), and I have also been able to examine recordings from Israel (S. Harrap), Yemen (P. Davidson) and Socotra (M. Evans, R. F. Porter & S. Aspinall). All closely match the species' typical double- or treble-noted song, which is somewhat reminiscent of a distant yapping dog, except those from Socotra, which are rather quiet but appear to be single-noted, although the recordists regarded them as identical to those in south-west Arabia. Fry & Harwin (1988) described identical vocalisations in Africa. Tristram (mentioned in Cleere & Nurney 1998 and Holyoak 2001) noted a call similar to that of European Nightjar *C. europaeus*, and Sherif M. Baha el Din (*in litt.* 2003) heard 'a low buzz or purr' from this species in flight during early evening at Gebel Elba, south-east Egypt.

Conclusion

Most previous authors have commented on the presence of well-marked differences in overall ground coloration between named populations of Nubian Nightjar, but in fact this only applies to *nubicus* and perhaps *tamaricis* (although see above), with all other subspecies being generally rather similar, displaying as much intra-form variation as that between subspecies, and *jonesi* and *taruensis* being, in my opinion, best regarded as not diagnosable. Like many cryptically plumaged ground-dwelling birds, the subspecies of Nubian Nightjar vary in ground coloration in response to overall humidity and soil colour, sometimes perhaps at a micro-scale. This makes the definition of subspecific limits particularly difficult and in some cases probably of relatively little real significance in determining evolutionary relationships and divergence. Especially when dealing with nocturnal birds, such as in the present case, it strengthens the necessity of focusing on vocalisations or molecular data as tools for elucidating meaningful divergence between different populations. Indeed, the importance of vocal characters in Caprimulgiform taxonomy was re-emphasised recently by Whitney *et al.* (2003), who demonstrated how a lack of such analysis could, in extreme cases, even lead to incorrect generic application. Nevertheless, whilst the use of such characters in taxonomy is important (see, e.g., the review by Alström & Ranft 2003), over-reliance on them may also have important implications in some groups of birds (Raposo & Höfling 2003), as the perceived importance of vocal characters, for instance, may be less clearly proven than often believed.

Acknowledgements

For access to relevant specimen material at the Natural History Museum, at Tring, I am, as always, indebted to Robert Prŷs-Jones and Mark Adams. Ron Demey checked an additional specimen of *taruensis* held at the Royal Museum for Central Africa, at Tervuren, on my behalf, provided many useful comments and suggestions on the final manuscript, and also graciously prepared the French summary. The invaluable assistance of Shannon Kenney at the American Museum of Natural History demands special mention. Comments from the referee, Michel Louette, on an earlier draft were of considerable assistance in preparing the final version. Simon Aspinall provided a photograph of *jonesi*, and he and Richard Porter commented on, and provided information for, this note. Richard Ranft provided information

and details of vocalisation recordings held at the National Sound Archive, London, UK. Sherif Baha el Din proffered information from the Gebel Elba region of south-east Egypt. Additional photographic material was made available by Marc Guyt (AGAMI Photo Agency) and Per Smitterberg, whilst Effie Warr and Clem Fisher assisted with some references and unpublished literature. My field work in Yemen was undertaken as a member of the 1993 Ornithological Society of the Middle East South Yemen expedition.

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The birds of Pic de Fon Forest Reserve, Guinea: a preliminary survey

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Les oiseaux de la Forêt classée du Pic de Fon, Guinée: un inventaire préliminaire. En 11 jours de travaux sur le terrain dans la Forêt classée du Pic de Fon, Guinée du sud-est, du 27 novembre au 7 décembre 2002, nous avons recensé 233 espèces d'oiseaux, dont 131 dans la zone de haute altitude à 900–1.550 m (08°31'N 08°54'W) et 198 dans la zone de basse altitude à 550–800 m (08°31'N 08°56'W). La protection de huit d'entre elles est d'intérêt mondial (deux observées dans la zone de haute altitude et sept dans la zone de basse altitude), la plus importante étant la Prinia de Sierra Leone *Schistolais leontica*, dont la distribution dans les zones d'altitude d'Afrique de l'Ouest est très limitée. Nous avons trouvé six des 15 espèces à répartition restreinte qui composent la Zone d'Endémisme d'Oiseaux de la forêt de Haute Guinée. Un échantillon significatif des espèces strictement forestières du pays a été rencontré, puisque nous avons identifié 104 des 153 espèces du biome des forêts guinéo-congolaises recensées en Guinée. Sept espèces sont signalées pour la première fois en Guinée: le Grand-duc à aigrettes *Bubo poensis*, le Martinet de Cassin *Neafrapus cassini*, l'Indicateur de Willcocks *Indicator willcocksi*, l'Eurylaime du Cap *Smithornis capensis*, le Bulbul de Baumann *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, l'Agrobate du Ghana *Cercotrichas leucosticta* et le Combassou du Cameroon *Vidua camerunensis*.

The avifauna of Guinea is comparatively poorly known and large areas of the country remain to be surveyed (Robertson 2001a). Previous to the present survey, detailed ornithological studies had been conducted in only two areas in the south-east of the country (Wilson 1990, Halleux 1994). During Conservation International's priority-setting workshop in Elmina, Ghana, in 1999, Pic de Fon Forest Reserve, in south-east Guinea, was thought likely to hold high biotic diversity and the area was identified as a priority for biodiversity assessment (Bakarr *et al.* 2001). A Rapid Assessment Program (RAP) multidisciplinary survey was therefore organised.

As part of this, we carried out field work in the Pic de Fon Forest Reserve from 27 November to 7 December 2002. The reserve lies at the southern end of the Simandou mountain range, a part of the Upper Guinea highlands which extends for 100 km, from Komodou in the north to Kouankan in the south. Created in 1953, the reserve covers *c.*25,600 ha (thus being the third largest in the Guinée Forestière region) and is situated in the transition between forest and savanna zones, and therefore contains habitat types ranging from rainforest to humid Guinea savanna. It covers an altitudinal range from *c.*550 m to more than 1,600 m (including the Pic de Fon, the highest

Captions to figures on opposite page

Figure 1. Looking south from Pic de Fon, at 1,400 m (Hugo J. Rainey)

Vue vers le sud du Pic de Fon, à 1.400 m (Hugo J. Rainey)

Figure 2. View of the Pic de Fon highlands from the lowlands (Hugo J. Rainey)

La zone de haute altitude du Pic de Fon vue à partir de la zone de basse altitude (Hugo J. Rainey)

Figure 3. View south-east from the Pic de Fon, at 1,400 m (Hugo J. Rainey)

Vue au sud-est du Pic de Fon, à 1.400 m (Hugo J. Rainey)

Figure 4. Lemon Dove / Pigeon à masque blanc *Aplopelia larvata* (Hugo J. Rainey)

Figure 5. Sierra Leone Prinia / Prinia du Sierra Leone *Schistolais leontica* (Hugo J. Rainey)

Figure 6. Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye / Pririt à ventre doré *Dyaphorophyia concreta* (Hugo J. Rainey)

Figure 7. Red-cheeked Wattle-eye / Pririt de Blissett *Dyaphorophyia blissetti* (Hugo J. Rainey)

Figure 8. Black-headed Rufous Warbler / Bathmocerque à capuchon *Bathmocercus cerviniventris* (Hugo J. Rainey)

Figure 9. Green Twinspot / Sénégali vert *Mandingoa nitidula* (Hugo J. Rainey)

Captions are on opposite page

point of the range at 1,656 m and the second highest peak in Guinea) and hence includes montane grassland, a rare habitat type in the Upper Guinea forest block. The range contains some of the highest-grade iron ore in the world and an international mining company is currently conducting exploration activities on four contiguous licensed concessions.

We carried out four days of field work in the highlands at 900–1,550 m (08°31'N 08°54'W) (27–30 November) and seven days in the lowlands at 550–800 m (08°31'N 08°56'W) (1–7 December), at two sites which were *c.*3.5 km apart.

Nomenclature, taxonomy and sequence follow Borrow & Demey (2001). The gender of species names has been corrected, following David & Gosselin (2002a,b) and *Ploceus superciliosus*, *Lonchura cucullata* and *Lonchura bicolor* have become *Pachyphantes superciliosus*, *Spermestes cucullatus* and *Spermestes bicolor*, respectively, following Fry & Keith (2004).

Methods

The principal method used during this study consisted of observing birds while walking slowly along mining tracks and forest trails. Attempts were made to visit as many habitats as possible, particularly those that appeared likely to hold threatened or poorly known species. However, the difficulty of access to most parts of the forest, due to the steep and rocky slopes, the dense vegetation and the scarcity or absence of paths meant that we were unable to cover large areas. The main habitats at the highland site consisted of grassland on steep, rugged hills and, in ravines, along small streams and in valleys and depressions, forest bordered by bushes and scrub. At the lowland site the majority of the work was carried out in forest on steep hillsides and, lower down, in forest on level ground. A number of streams ran through the site, bordered by both forest and lower vegetation. Derived savanna covered the area between the lower limit of the forest and the boundary of the reserve. Some areas at the forest edge had been cleared for coffee and cassava cultivation and within the forest on level ground there were banana plantations and some cocoa.

Mist-netting was carried out on six days in all, at both sites. In the highlands mist-nets were set on two days for a total of 13.1 100-m net hours. They were set in grassland, at forest edge, in forest and across a small forest stream. In the lowlands mist-nets were set over four days for a total of 19.9 100-m net hours. They were set in primary forest (canopy 30–40 m), in low forest (canopy 15–20 m), across two small forest streams and at forest edge. One 12-m canopy net was set at a height of 20 m at the forest edge for 17.5 hours.

Results

We recorded 233 species during our survey. These are listed in Appendix 1, along with an estimate of relative abundance at each of the two sites and the indication of observed breeding evidence. Also indicated are endemism to the Upper Guinea forest block, threat status, membership of biome-restricted assemblages and habitat.

Highlands

In total, 132 species were recorded at this site (Appendix 1), of which two are of global conservation concern (BirdLife International 2004): Sierra Leone Prinia *Schistolais leontica* is classified as Vulnerable and Emerald Starling *Lamprotornis iris* as Data Deficient. Of the 124 species of the Guinea-Congo Forests biome recorded from the country (Robertson 2001a, this study), 49 (40%) were recorded in the highlands.

In addition, several species were observed that are rare and poorly known in either Guinea or West Africa or both. These include Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*, Grey-winged Robin Chat *Cossypha polioptera*, Dusky Crested Flycatcher *Elminia nigromitrata*, Preuss's Golden-backed Weaver *Ploceus preussi*, Green Twinspot *Mandingoa nitidula* and Dybowski's Twinspot *Euschistospiza dybowski*. The distinctive subspecies *henrici* of Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafra africana*, which is restricted to a few highland areas in Sierra Leone and on Mount Nimba, was fairly common in the grasslands. Palearctic migrants from Europe were common in both forest and grassland.

Lowlands

At this site 198 species were recorded (Appendix 1), seven of which are of global conservation concern (BirdLife International 2004). Two of these are classified as Vulnerable (Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike *Lobotos lobatus* and Yellow-bearded Greenbul *Criniger olivaceus*), three are Near Threatened (Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*, Black-headed Rufous Warbler

Bathmocercus cerviniventris and Rufous-winged Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufescens*), whilst two are considered Data Deficient (Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni* and Emerald Starling). Of the 125 species of the Guinea-Congo Forests biome occurring in the country (Robertson 2001a, this study), 98 (78%) were found in the lowlands.

Rare or poorly known species included also a forest ibis *Bostrychia rara/olivacea*, Blue-headed Bee-eater *Merops muelleri*, Lyre-tailed Honeyguide *Melichneutes robustus*, Grey-winged Robin Chat, Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophyia concreta*, Dusky Tit *Parus funereus* and Green Twinspot.

At both sites, mist-netting was successful in its aims of finding inconspicuous species that would not otherwise have been observed. In total, 181 individuals of 56 species were caught (Appendix 2). Our capture rate of 5.5 birds per 100-m net hours is relatively high compared to previously reported rates from other West African forests (e.g. Allport *et al.* 1989, Gartshore *et al.* 1995).

Six of the 15 restricted-range species (with a global breeding range of less than 50,000 km^2) that occur in the Upper Guinea forests Endemic Bird Area (Fishpool & Evans 2001, Stattersfield *et al.* 1998) were found in the reserve: Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike, Yellow-bearded Greenbul, Black-headed Rufous Warbler, Sierra Leone Prinia, Sharpe's Apalis *Apalis sharpii* and Rufous-winged Illadopsis. Seven species were recorded for the first time in Guinea (see below).

Notes on selected species

All species new to Guinea (indicated by *) are included. For an explanation of the threat status (VU = Vulnerable; nt = Near Threatened; DD = Data Deficient): see Appendix 1. Status in West Africa is taken from Borrow & Demey (2001).

Ibis sp. *Bostrychia rara/olivacea*
One seen by I. Herbinger (pers. comm.) at a forest stream at 900 m near the lowland camp. It was not specifically identified but either of the two possible species, which are both rare and local in West Africa, would be new for Guinea.

Lemon Dove *Aplopelia larvata*
One trapped at 570 m in forest with a low canopy (*c.*15 m). Known from few sites in West Africa, from Sierra Leone to western Côte d'Ivoire, where it is rare to uncommon.

***Fraser's Eagle Owl** *Bubo poensis*
One adult was identified from a rattling call tape-recorded on 6 December in high primary forest. First record for Guinea. Uncommon to fairly common throughout the Lower Guinea forest block.

***Cassin's Spinetail** *Neafrapus cassini*
One to three seen on four days at the lowland site. First records for Guinea. This is a locally not uncommon resident with irregular distribution in the rainforest zone in West Africa.

Blue-headed Bee-eater *Merops muelleri*
A pair seen at the forest edge at 570 m; one individual of this pair was subsequently trapped at the same site. Scarce and local in West Africa.

Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata* (nt)
Seen on four days in the lowlands. One flock numbered 14 birds; the other observations were of two individuals on each occasion. Previously known from three other sites in Guinea (Robertson 2001a). Remarkably few hornbills of any species were observed throughout the whole survey.

Lyre-tailed Honeyguide *Melichneutes robustus*
One heard displaying daily above gallery forest at 560 m. Previously reported only from Ziama Forest Reserve (Halleux 1994).

***Willcocks's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksi*
One heard singing in gallery forest at 560 m and another seen at the edge of a forest clearing at 570 m. First records for Guinea. A rare to uncommon forest resident in West Africa.

***African Broadbill** *Smithornis capensis*
Five seen and heard displaying in forest at the lowland site. First records for Guinea. A generally scarce to rare resident with a patchy distribution in West Africa.

Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafra africana*
Seen frequently in the grassland and on the mining tracks above 1,300 m. The subspecies in question, *henrici*, is known from only a few highland areas in Upper Guinea (Borrow & Demey 2001). A displaying male was repeatedly seen jumping

vertically *c.*80 cm off the ground with rattling wings. This behaviour does not appear to have been described previously (Colston & Curry-Lindahl 1986, Keith *et al.* 1992, R. Safford pers. comm.).

Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike *Lobotos lobatus* (VU)
One male seen foraging in the canopy and sub-canopy at heights of 15–25 m in primary forest near a clearing at *c.*750 m. Previously only known in Guinea from Ziama Forest Reserve (Halleux 1994, Robertson 2001a)

***Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni* (DD)
One pair heard and seen at the forest edge at *c.*570 m, where the forest graded into derived savanna. What was presumed to be the same pair was found the next day in a mixed-species flock *c.*100 m from the original site. First records for Guinea. Until recently there were very few reliable records of it anywhere within its range (Fishpool 2000).

Yellow-bearded Greenbul *Criniger olivaceus* (VU)
A pair seen in a mixed-species flock in primary forest at *c.*570 m, feeding in the mid-storey at a height of 10–15 m. Previously known only from Ziama and Diécké Forest Reserves (Robertson 2001a).

Lowland Akalat *Sheppardia cyornithopsis*
Three trapped in forest at 570 and 1,350 m and one seen at the former site in a mixed-species flock. This is a relatively high encounter rate for a species that is rarely recorded in West Africa.

***Forest Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas leucosticta*
A pair trapped in low forest (canopy *c.*15 m) at 570 m. First record for Guinea. This shy species is a scarce forest resident, occurring in West Africa from Sierra Leone to Ghana.

Black-headed Rufous Warbler *Bathmocercus cerviniventris* (nt)
Four singing males and a duetting pair in dense vegetation near small streams at 550–580 m. A presumed female trapped in the territory of one of the four males; its plumage matched the illustration of the immature in Borrow & Demey (2001). Observations of birds in this plumage in the vicinity of singing males (here and in Côte d'Ivoire) lead us to believe that these were actually adult females (*contra* Borrow & Demey 2001, who state that the adult female is probably inseparable from the male). Previously this extremely local species was known only from Ziama (Halleux 1994).

Sierra Leone Prinia *Schistolais leontica* (VU)
At least two and probably three pairs were found at 1,300–1,350 m. One pair was found in large bushes inside gallery forest and a second in low dense bushes at the edge of another patch of gallery forest. Two individuals were trapped on the other side of this forest patch. The face and underparts of one bird (a juvenile?) were slightly paler than those of the other. There are now published records of this species from four sites throughout its restricted range, including only one other site in Guinea: Mount Nimba (Fishpool 2001, Okoni-Williams *et al.* 2001, Robertson 2001a,b, L. D. C. Fishpool pers. comm.).

Dusky Crested Flycatcher *Elminia nigromitrata*
Recorded almost daily in both highland and lowland areas; three also trapped in the lowlands. Generally uncommon in West Africa, but appears to be quite common in south-east Guinea (Halleux 1994, this study).

Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophyia concreta*
Encountered in both highlands and lowlands; two caught in the lowlands. Generally rare to scarce in West Africa.

Rufous-winged Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufescens* (nt)
Heard singing in primary forest at *c.*570, 650 and 1,200 m.

Dusky Tit *Parus funereus*
Three together foraging in the canopy of large trees at the edge of a clearing at *c.*570 m. Generally rare to scarce in West Africa and previously only reported in Guinea from Ziama Forest Reserve (Halleux 1994).

Emerald Starling *Lamprotornis iris* (DD)
A flock of ten in wooded savanna at the Rio Tinto camp (located several km east of the highland site) and one individual in similar habitat at the lowland site.

Preuss's Golden-backed Weaver *Ploceus preussi*
One seen in forest at 1,350 m. Previously reported from Ziama and Diécké Forest Reserves (Wilson 1990, Halleux 1994). Generally scarce and local in West Africa.

Green Twinspot *Mandingoa nitidula*
Two trapped at the forest edge at 1,350 m and 580 m respectively. Uncommon to rare in West Africa.

Dybowski's Twinspot *Euschistospiza dybowski*
Three males trapped at the forest edge at 1,350 m. Uncommon to scarce and local in West Africa.

***Cameroon Indigobird** *Vidua camerunensis*
Four male indigobirds seen at the forest edge at 1,500 m and two other males in savanna at 560 m were identified as this species on the basis of the white bill, pale purple legs and brown flight feathers. Two of its potential host species were found in the reserve: Dybowski's Twinspot and Blue-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta rubricata*. The status and distribution of this species are imperfectly known due to its similarity with other indigobirds.

Discussion

The total of 233 species recorded at both sites is high in view of both the short study period and in comparison with the total number of *c.*600 species then recorded for the whole of Guinea. This gives an indication of the high quality of the reserve. By comparison, 287 and 141 species have been recorded in Ziama and Diécké Forest Reserves respectively, the two other sites in south-east Guinea that have been studied (Robertson 2001a). After many years of intensive study, 383 species have been found on the Liberian side of Mount Nimba and its surrounding forests (Colston & Curry-Lindahl 1986). The 104 species restricted to the Guinea-Congo Forests biome that we recorded in the reserve constitute 83% of the species of this biome known from Guinea—a high proportion. The large number of species of conservation concern recorded during such a short survey is also indicative of the quality and potential of the forest.

The presence of Sierra Leone Prinia in the highlands was the most important finding of the study. This species is currently only known from three other sites in the world and one of these, Guinean Mount Nimba, is also being prospected for mineral deposits by a mining company, whilst some of its habitat on the Liberian side of the mountain has already been destroyed by mining. Sierra Leone Prinia seems to be only found in dense vegetation at forest edge and along streams above 700 m (Borrow & Demey 2001, this study). It could be particularly vulnerable to alteration of the higher altitude habitats in Pic de Fon. Although the threat status of this species is currently given as Vulnerable because it has an inferred adult population of fewer than 10,000 individuals which is declining and fragmented, it may perhaps be reclassified as Endangered, as it is likely to have an area of occupancy of less than 500 km^2 and is known from fewer than six locations (BirdLife International 2000). Even though some mountains in the Upper Guinea region where Sierra Leone Prinia might occur have not yet been surveyed for birds, a fresh review of the conservation status of this species appears desirable.

Very few hornbills, either numbers or species, were encountered in the reserve. Most forest hornbill species have been recorded at the other forest reserves in south-east Guinea (Robertson 2001a). As hornbills are known to be capable of long-distance movements to obtain food (Kemp 1995, Rainey & Zuberbühler in prep.) this absence may be a function of the local phenology of the fruiting trees. Hunting of large mammal species was found to be quite intensive in the forest reserve. Our guide, A. Camara, indicated that hunters also targeted birds and this may partially explain the absence or low density of larger species such as guineafowl and hornbills. Yellow-headed Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* and Nimba Flycatcher *Melaenornis annamarulae*, two species of conservation concern, were not recorded during the survey. Given the reserve's habitats and their presence at similar sites nearby (Robertson 2001a), however, they may reasonably be expected to occur.

This site qualifies as an Important Bird Area on the basis of the number of threatened species and presence of large numbers of both restricted range and biome-restricted species (Fishpool & Evans 2001).

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Appendix 1. Bird species recorded in Pic de Fon Forest Reserve, 27 November–7 December 2002

Annexe 1. Espèces d'oiseaux observées dans la Forêt classée du Pic de Fon, 27 novembre–7 décembre 2002

			Highland	Lowland	Status	Biome	Habitat
Ciconiidae (1)							
Ciconia episcopus	Woolly-necked Stork	Cigogne épiscopale		R			a
Threskiornithidae (1)							
Bostrychia rara/olivacea	Ibis sp.	Ibis sp.		R			l
Accipitridae (15)							
Pernis apivorus	European Honey Buzzard	Bondrée apivore		R			a
Gypohierax angolensis	Palm-nut Vulture	Palmiste africain		U			a
Gyps africanus	African White-backed Vulture	Vautour africain		R			a
Polyboroides typus	African Harrier Hawk	Gymnogène d'Afrique		C			c,a
Circus aeruginosus	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	Busard des roseaux	U				g
Accipiter tachiro	African Goshawk	Autour tachiro		U			c,a
Accipiter melanoleucus	Black Sparrowhawk	Autour noir		R			a
Urotriorchis macrourus	Long-tailed Hawk	Autour à longue queue		U		GC	m
Kaupifalco monogrammicus	Lizard Buzzard	Autour unibande	U	R			e,l
Buteo auguralis	Red-necked Buzzard	Buse d'Afrique		R			a
Hieraeetus ayresii	Ayres's Hawk Eagle	Aigle d'Ayres		R			a
Lophaetus occipitalis	Long-crested Eagle	Aigle huppard	R	R			a
Spizaetus africanus	Cassin's Hawk Eagle	Aigle de Cassin		R		GC	a
Stephanoaetus coronatus	Crowned Eagle	Aigle couronné	U				a
Polemaetus bellicosus	Martial Eagle	Aigle martial	U				a
Falconidae (1)							
Falco biarmicus	Lanner Falcon	Faucon lanier		R			a
Phasianidae (4)							
Ptilopachus petrosus	Stone Partridge	Poule de roche	C				g
Francolinus lathami	Latham's Forest Francolin	Francolin de Latham		U		GC	l
Francolinus ahantensis	Ahanta Francolin	Francolin d'Ahanta	C	C		GC	l,e
Francolinus bicalcaratus	Double-spurred Francolin	Francolin à double éperon	R				g
Rallidae (1)							
Sarothrura pulchra	White-spotted Flufftail	Râle perlé	C	F		GC	l,r
Columbidae (8)							
Treron calvus	African Green Pigeon	Colombar à front nu	U	C			c
Turtur brehmeri	Blue-headed Wood Dove	Tourtelette demoiselle		C		GC	l
Turtur tympanistria	Tambourine Dove	Tourtelette tambourette	U	C			l
Turtur afer	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	Tourtelette améthystine		F			s
Columba iriditorques	Western Bronze-naped Pigeon	Pigeon à nuque bronzée	R	C		GC	c
Aplopelia larvata	Lemon Dove	Pigeon à masque blanc		R			l
Streptopelia semitorquata	Red-eyed Dove	Tourterelle à collier		F			s
Streptopelia vinacea	Vinaceous Dove	Tourterelle vineuse	R				s
Musophagidae (2)							
Corythaeola cristata	Great Blue Turaco	Touraco géant	R	C			c,m
Tauraco persa	Green Turaco	Touraco vert	C	C		GC	c,m
Cuculidae (8)							
Cuculus clamosus	Black Cuckoo	Coucou criard		R			s
Cercococcyx mechowi	Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo	Coucou de Mechow		F		GC	m
Cercococcyx olivinus	Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo	Coucou olivâtre		C		GC	m
Chrysococcyx cupreus	African Emerald Cuckoo	Coucou foliotocol	C	C			c
Chrysococcyx klaas	Klaas's Cuckoo	Coucou de Klaas	F	F			c
Ceuthmochares aereus	Yellowbill	Malcoha à bec jaune	F	F			m,l
Centropus leucogaster	Black-throated Coucal	Coucal à ventre blanc		F			l
Centropus senegalensis	Senegal Coucal	Coucal de Sénégal	U	F[b]			g,s
Tytonidae (1)							
Tyto alba	Barn Owl	Effraie des clochers		R			s
Strigidae (3)							
Bubo africanus	Spotted Eagle Owl	Grand-duc africain	R				s
**Bubo poensis*	Fraser's Eagle Owl	Grand-duc à aigrettes		R		GC	c,m
Strix woodfordii	African Wood Owl	Chouette africaine		F			m
Caprimulgidae (1)							
Macrodipteryx longipennis	Standard-winged Nightjar	Engoulevent à balanciers	R				s

Apodidae (2)							
Rhaphidura sabini	Sabine's Spinetail	Martinet de Sabine		F		GC	a
**Neafrapus cassini*	Cassin's Spinetail	Martinet de Cassin		F		GC	a
Trogonidae (1)							
Apaloderma narina	Narina's Trogon	Trogon narina		U			m
Alcedinidae (6)							
Halcyon badia	Chocolate-backed Kingfisher	Martin-chasseur marron		U		GC	m
Halcyon leucocephala	Grey-headed Kingfisher	Martin-chasseur à tête grise	R	R			e,s
Halcyon malimbica	Blue-breasted Kingfisher	Martin-chasseur à poitrine bleue	R	F			m,l
Ceyx pictus	African Pygmy Kingfisher	Martin-pêcheur pygmée		U			e
Alcedo leucogaster	White-bellied Kingfisher	Martin-pêcheur à vent blanc		R		GC	l,r
Alcedo quadribrachys	Shining-blue Kingfisher	Martin-pêcheur azuré		R			r
Meropidae (4)							
Merops muelleri	Blue-headed Bee-eater	Guêpier à tête bleue		R		GC	m,e
Merops gularis	Black Bee-eater	Guêpier noir	R			GC	e
Merops albicollis	White-throated Bee-eater	Guêpier à gorge blanche	C	C			a,g,s
Merops apiaster	European Bee-eater	Guêpier d'Europe		U			s
Coraciidae (1)							
Eurystomus glaucurus	Broad-billed Roller	Rolle violet		R			e
Phoeniculidae (1)							
Phoeniculus bollei	White-headed Wood-hoopoe	Irrisor à tête blanche		R			e
Bucerotidae (2)							
Tockus fasciatus	African Pied Hornbill	Calao longibande		C		GC	c,e,s
Ceratogymna elata	Yellow-casqued Hornbill	Calao à casque jaune		F	nt	GC	c,e
Capitonidae (9)							
Gymnobucco calvus	Naked-faced Barbet	Barbican chauve	C	C		GC	c,e
Pogoniulus scolopaceus	Speckled Tinkerbird	Barbion grivelé		C		GC	e
Pogoniulus atroflavus	Red-rumped Tinkerbird	Barbion à croupion rouge	C	C		GC	c
Pogoniulus subsulphureus	Yellow-throated Tinkerbird	Barbion à gorge jaune	U	C		GC	c,m,e
Pogoniulus bilineatus	Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	Barbion à croupion jaune	C	C			c,m,e
Buccanodon duchaillui	Yellow-spotted Barbet	Barbican à taches jaunes	R	C		GC	c
Tricholaema hirsuta	Hairy-breasted Barbet	Barbican hérissé		C		GC	c,m,e
Lybius vieilloti	Vieillot's Barbet	Barbican de Vieillot	U	R			s
Trachylaemus purpuratus	Yellow-billed Barbet	Barbican pourpré	R			GC	m,l
Indicatoridae (4)							
Melichneutes robustus	Lyre-tailed Honeyguide	Indicateur à queue en lyre		R		GC	c,e
Indicator maculatus	Spotted Honeyguide	Indicateur tacheté		R		GC	m,l
Indicator conirostris	Thick-billed Honeyguide	Indicateur à gros bec	R	R			c,m
**Indicator willcocksi*	Willcocks's Honeyguide	Indicateur de Willcocks		U		GC	c,m
Picidae (5)							
Campethera maculosa	Little Green Woodpecker	Pic barré		U		GC	m
Campethera nivosa	Buff-spotted Woodpecker	Pic tacheté		F		GC	m,l
Dendropicos gabonensis	Gabon Woodpecker	Pic du Gabon	F	F		GC	c,m,e
Dendropicos fuscescens	Cardinal Woodpecker	Pic cardinal		U			e,s
Dendropicos pyrrhogaster	Fire-bellied Woodpecker	Pic à ventre de feu		F			e
Eurylaimidae (1)							
**Smithornis capensis*	African Broadbill	Eurylaime du Cap		F			l
Alaudidae (1)							
Mirafra africana	Singing Bush Lark	Alouette à nuque rousse	F				g
Hirundinidae (6)							
Psalidoprocne nitens	Square-tailed Saw-wing	Hirondelle à queue courte	R	C		GC	a,e,s
Psalidoprocne obscura	Fanti Saw-wing	Hirondelle fanti		C		GC	a,e,s
Riparia riparia	Common Sand Martin	Hirondelle de rivage		U			a,s
Hirundo abyssinica	Lesser Striped Swallow	Hirondelle striée		R			a,s
Hirundo preussi	Preuss's Cliff Swallow	Hirondelle de Preuss		C			a,s
Hirundo rustica	Barn Swallow	Hirondelle rustique	C	C			a,s
Motacillidae (5)							
Motacilla flava	Yellow Wagtail	Bergeronnette printanière	U				g
Motacilla clara	Mountain Wagtail	Bergeronnette à longue queue		R			r
Anthus similis	Long-billed Pipit	Pipit à long bec	F				g
Anthus trivialis	Tree Pipit	Pipit des arbres	U				e,g
Anthus cervinus	Red-throated Pipit	Pipit à gorge rousse	C				g
Campephagidae (2)							
Campephaga quiscalina	Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike	Echenilleur pourpré	C	F			c
Lobotos lobatus	Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike	Echenilleur à barbillons		R	VU°	GC	c,m

Pycnonotidae (19)							
Andropadus virens	Little Greenbul	Bulbul verdâtre	C	C			l,e
Andropadus gracilis	Little Grey Greenbul	Bulbul gracile		C		GC	c,e
Andropadus ansorgei	Ansorge's Greenbul	Bulbul d'Ansorge	R	C		GC	c,e
Andropadus curvirostris	Cameroon Sombre Greenbul	Bulbul curvirostre		U		GC	l,e
Andropadus gracilirostris	Slender-billed Greenbul	Bulbul à bec grêle	F	C			c,e
Andropadus latirostris	Yellow-whiskered Greenbul	Bulbul à moustaches jaunes	C	C[b]			l,e
Baeopogon indicator	Honeyguide Greenbul	Bulbul à queue blanche	F	C		GC	c,e
Chlorocichla simplex	Simple Leaflove	Bulbul modeste		C		GC	e
Thescelocichla leucopleura	Swamp Palm Bulbul	Bulbul des raphias		F		GC	e,r
Pyrrhurus scandens	Leaflove	Bulbul à queue rousse	C	C		GC	c,m,e
**Phyllastrephus baumanni*	Baumann's Greenbul	Bulbul de Baumann		R	DD	GC	e
Phyllastrephus icterinus	Icterine Greenbul	Bulbul icterin	U	F		GC	m,l
Bleda syndactylus	Red-tailed Bristlebill	Bulbul moustac		U		GC	l
Bleda canicapillus	Grey-headed Bristlebill	Bulbul fourmilier		F		GC	l
Criniger barbatus	Western Bearded Greenbul	Bulbul crinon	F	C		GC	m,l
Criniger calurus	Red-tailed Greenbul	Bulbul à barbe blanche	C	C		GC	m,l
Criniger olivaceus	Yellow-bearded Greenbul	Bulbul à barbe jaune		R	VU°	GC	m
Pycnonotus barbatus	Common Bulbul	Bulbul des jardins	C	C			e,s
Nicator chloris	Western Nicator	Bulbul nicator	F	F		GC	m,e
Turdidae (14)							
Stiphrornis erythrothorax	Forest Robin	Rougegorge de forêt	F	F		GC	l
Sheppardia cyornithopsis	Lowland Akalat	Rougegorge merle	R	U		GC	l
Luscinia megarhynchos	Common Nightingale	Rossignol philomèle	F	F			e,s
Cossypha polioptera	Grey-winged Robin Chat	Cossyphe à sourcils blancs	R	R			l
Cossypha niveicapilla	Snowy-crowned Robin Chat	Cossyphe à calotte neigeuse	U				l
Cossypha albicapilla	White-crowned Robin Chat	Cossyphe à calotte blanche		R[b]		SG	e
Alethe diademata	Fire-crested Alethe	Alèthe à huppe rousse	F	U		GC	l
Alethe poliocephala	Brown-chested Alethe	Alèthe à poitrine brune	F	U			l
Neocossyphus poensis	White-tailed Ant Thrush	Néocossyphe à queue blanche	F	F		GC	l
Stizorhina finschi	Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush	Stizorhin de Finsch	F	C		GC	m,l
**Cercotrichas leucosticta*	Forest Scrub Robin	Agrobate du Ghana		R		GC	l
Saxicola torquatus	Common Stonechat	Tarier pâtre	F				g
Saxicola rubetra	Whinchat	Tarier des prés	C	F			g,s
Turdus pelios	African Thrush	Merle africain	U	U			e
Sylviidae (27)							
Bathmocercus cerviniventris	Black-headed Rufous Warbler	Bathmocerque à capuchon		F	nt°	GC	e,r
Melocichla mentalis	African Moustached Warbler	Mélocichle à moustaches	F	U			g,s
Acrocephalus scirpaceus	European Reed Warbler	Rousserolle effarvatte	R				e,g
Hippolais polyglotta	Melodious Warbler	Hypolaïs polyglotte	R	U			e,s
Cisticola erythrops	Red-faced Cisticola	Cisticole à face rousse	U	U			g,s
Cisticola cantans	Singing Cisticola	Cisticole chanteuse	R	U			g,s
Cisticola lateralis	Whistling Cisticola	Cisticole siffleuse		F			s
Cisticola natalensis	Croaking Cisticola	Cisticole striée	R				g
Cisticola brachypterus	Short-winged Cisticola	Cisticole à ailes courtes	F				g
Prinia subflava	Tawny-flanked Prinia	Prinia modeste	C	C			e,g,s
Schistolais leontica	Sierra Leone Prinia	Prinia de Sierra Leone	F		VU°	GC	e
Apalis nigriceps	Black-capped Apalis	Apalis à calotte noire	C	C		GC	c
Apalis sharpii	Sharpe's Apalis	Apalis de Sharpe	C	C	°	GC	c
Camaroptera brachyura	Grey-backed Cameroptera	Camaroptère à tête grise	F	F			e
Camaroptera superciliaris	Yellow-browed Cameroptera	Camaroptère à sourcils jaunes		U		GC	e
Camaroptera chloronota	Olive-green Camaroptera	Camaroptère à dos vert	C	C		GC	l
Macrosphenus kempi	Kemp's Longbill	Nasique de Kemp	U			GC	e
Macrosphenus concolor	Grey Longbill	Nasique grise	C	F		GC	m,l
Eremomela badiceps	Rufous-crowned Erememela	Erémomèle à tête brune	C[b]	C		GC	c
Sylvietta virens	Green Crombec	Crombec vert		F		GC	e
Sylvietta denti	Lemon-bellied Crombec	Crombec à gorge tachetée	C	C		GC	c,m
Phylloscopus trochilus	Willow Warbler	Pouillot fitis	C	F			c,e,s
Phylloscopus sibilatrix	Wood Warbler	Pouillot siffleur		F			c,e
Sylvia borin	Garden Warbler	Fauvette des jardins	R	R			e,s
Sylvia atricapilla	Blackcap	Fauvette à tête noire	U	R			e,s
Hyliota violacea	Violet-backed Hyliota	Hyliote à dos violet		U		GC	c
Hylia prasina	Green Hylia	Hylia verte	C	C		GC	m,l,e
Muscicapidae (5)							
Fraseria ocreata	Fraser's Forest Flycatcher	Gobemouche forestier		R		GC	c

Fraseria cinerascens	White-browed Forest Flycatcher	Gobemouche à sourcils blancs		R		GC	e,r
Muscicapa epulata	Little Grey Flycatcher	Gobemouche cendré		R		GC	e
Muscicapa ussheri	Ussher's Flycatcher	Gobemouche d'Ussher	F	U		GC	c,e
Ficedula hypoleuca	Pied Flycatcher	Gobemouche noir	C	F			e,s
Monarchidae (4)							
Erythrocercus mccallii	Chestnut-capped Flycatcher	Erythrocerque à tête rousse	R	F		GC	c,m
Elminia nigromitrata	Dusky Crested Flycatcher	Tchitrec à tête noire	F	C		GC	l
Trochocercus nitens	Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher	Tchitrec noir		C		GC	l
Terpsiphone rufiventer	Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	Tchitrec à ventre roux	F	C[b]		GC	m,l
Platysteiridae (6)							
Megabyas flammulatus	Shrike Flycatcher	Bias écorcheur	F	F		GC	c
Bias musicus	Black-and-white Flycatcher	Bias musicien		U			c,e
Dyaphorophyia castanea	Chestnut Wattle-eye	Pririt châtain	R	U		GC	m,l
Dyaphorophyia blissetti	Red-cheeked Wattle-eye	Pririt de Blisset	R	F		GC	m,l
Dyaphorophyia concreta	Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye	Pririt à ventre doré	R	F			l
Platysteira cyanea	Common Wattle-eye	Pririt à collier	C				l,e
Timaliidae (6)							
Illadopsis rufipennis	Pale-breasted Illadopsis	Akalat à poitrine blanche		F			l
Illadopsis fulvescens	Brown Illadopsis	Akalat brun	R	R		GC	l
Illadopsis cleaveri	Blackcap Illadposis	Akalat à tête noire		F		GC	l
Illadopsis rufescens	Rufous-winged Illadopsis	Akalat à ailes rousses	R	F	nt[o]	GC	l
Illadopsis puveli	Puvel's Illadopsis	Akalat de Puvel	C	U		GC	l
Phyllanthus atripennis	Capuchin Babbler	Phyllanthe à gorge blanche	U			GC	m,l
Paridae (1)							
Parus funereus	Dusky Tit	Mésange enfumée		R		GC	c
Remizidae (1)							
Pholidornis rushiae	Tit-hylia	Mésangette rayée		R		GC	c,m
Nectariniidae (12)							
Anthreptes rectirostris	Green Sunbird	Souimanga à bec droit		C		GC	c,m
Cyanomitra verticalis	Green-headed Sunbird	Souimanga à tête verte	R				e
Cyanomitra cyanolaema	Blue-throated Brown Sunbird	Souimanga à gorge bleue	F	C		GC	c
Cyanomitra obscura	Western Olive Sunbird	Souimanga olivâtre de l'Ouest	C	C[b]			m,l
Chalcomitra senegalensis	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	Souimanga à poitrine rouge	F	U			e
Hedydipna collaris	Collared Sunbird	Souimanga à collier		C			e
Hedydipna platura	Pygmy Sunbird	Souimanga pygmée	R				e
Cinnyris chloropygius	Olive-bellied Sunbird	Souimanga à ventre olive		C			e
Cinnyris venustus	Variable Sunbird	Souimanga à ventre jaune	C	U			e,s
Cinnyris johannae	Johanna's Sunbird	Souimanga de Johanna		R		GC	c,e
Cinnyris superbus	Superb Sunbird	Souimanga superbe		U		GC	c,e
Cinnyris cupreus	Copper Sunbird	Souimanga cuivré	F[b]				e
Zosteropidae (1)							
Zosterops senegalensis	Yellow White-eye	Zostérops jaune	F	C			e,s
Malaconotidae (5)							
Malaconotus cruentus	Fiery-breasted Bush-shrike	Gladiateur ensanglanté		U		GC	m
Malaconotus multicolor	Many-coloured Bush-shrike	Gladiateur multicolore	C	F			c,m
Tchagra australis	Brown-crowned Tchagra	Tchagra à tête brune		U			e
Dryoscopus gambensis	Northern Puffback	Cubla de Gambie	U				c,m
Laniarius aethiopicus	Tropical Boubou	Gonolek d'Abyssinie	R				e
Oriolidae (2)							
Oriolus nigripennis	Black-winged Oriole	Loriot à ailes noires		U		GC	c
Oriolus brachyrhynchus	Western Black-headed Oriole	Loriot à tête noire	C	C		GC	c
Dicruridae (3)							
Dicrurus ludwigii	Square-tailed Drongo	Drongo de Ludwig	C	C			m
Dicrurus atripennis	Shining Drongo	Drongo de forêt		R		GC	m,l
Dricurus modestus	Velvet-mantled Drongo	Drongo modeste		U			c,e
Sturnidae (4)							
Onychognathus fulgidus	Forest Chestnut-winged Starling	Rufipenne de forêt		U		GC	c
Lamprotornis chloropterus	Lesser Blue-eared Starling	Choucador de Swainson	R	R			s
Lamprotornis iris	Emerald Starling	Choucador iris	R	R	DD	SG	s
Cinnyricinclus leucogaster	Violet-backed Starling	Spréo améthyste		U			s
Passeridae (1)							
Petronia dentata	Bush Petronia	Petit Moineau	R			SG	s
Ploceidae (11)							
Ploceus nigricollis	Black-necked Weaver	Tisserin à cou noir		F			e
Ploceus nigerrimus	Vieillot's Black Weaver	Tisserin noir		R		GC	e

Ploceus cucullatus	Village Weaver	Tisserin gendarme		C		e,s
Ploceus preussi	Preuss's Golden-backed Weaver	Tisserin de Preuss	R		GC	c
Pachyphantes superciliosus	Compact Weaver	Tisserin gros-bec		R[b]		s
Malimbus nitens	Blue-billed Malimbe	Malimbe à bec bleu		F	GC	m,l,e
Malimbus malimbicus	Crested Malimbe	Malimbe huppé	F	U	GC	m
Malimbus scutatus	Red-vented Malimbe	Malimbe à queue rouge		F	GC	c,e
Quelea erythrops	Red-headed Quelea	Travailleur à tête rouge		R		s
Euplectes hordeaceus	Black-winged Red Bishop	Euplecte monseigneur		F		s
Euplectes ardens	Red-collared Widowbird	Euplecte veuve-noire	U	F		g,s
Estrilididae (11)						
Nigrita canicapillus	Grey-crowned Negrofinch	Nigrette à calotte grise	C	C		c
Nigrita bicolor	Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch	Nigrette à ventre roux		F	GC	c
Nigrita fusconotus	White-breasted Negrofinch	Nigrette à ventre blanc		R	GC	c
Spermophaga haematina	Western Bluebill	Sénégali sanguin	R	C	GC	e
Mandingoa nitidula	Green Twinspot	Sénégali vert	R	R		e
Euschistospiza dybowskii	Dybowski's Twinspot	Sénégali à ventre noir	U		SG	e,g
Lagonosticta rubricata	Blue-billed Firefinch	Amarante flambé	U	F		g,s
Estrilda melpoda	Orange-cheeked Waxbill	Astrild à joues oranges	F	U		g,s
Estrilda astrild	Common Waxbill	Astrild ondulé	U	U[b]		g,s
Spermestes cucullatus	Bronze Mannikin	Capucin nonnette	R	R		g,s
Spermestes bicolor	Black-and-white Mannikin	Capucin bicolore		F[b]		e
Viduidae (1)						
**Vidua camerunensis*	Cameroon Indigobird	Combassou du Cameroun	R	R		e,g,s
Fringillidae (1)						
Serinus mozambicus	Yellow-fronted Canary	Serin de Mozambique	C			e,g
Emberizidae (2)						
Emberiza hortulana	Ortolan Bunting	Bruant ortolan	R			g
Emberiza tahapisi	Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting	Bruant cannelle	C			g
Species total / Total espèces: 233			131	198		

* = species recorded in Guinea for the first time during this study / espèce observée en Guinée pour la première fois pendant cette étude (7)

Abundance in highland and lowland sites / Abondance dans les sites de haute et de basse altitude :

C = Common: encountered daily, either singly or in significant numbers / Commune: observée quatidiennement, seule ou en nombre conséquent
F = Fairly common: encountered on most days / Assez commune: observée presque chaque jour
U = Uncommon: irregularly encountered and not on the majority of days / Peu commune: observée irrégulièrement et pas tous les jours
R = Rare: rarely encountered, one or two records of single individuals / Rare: rarement observée, une ou deux observations d'individus solitaires
[b] = Evidence of breeding observed / preuve de reproduction observée

Status

Threat status / Statut de conservation (BirdLife International 2000):

VU = Vulnerable: species facing a high risk of extinction in the medium-term future
Vulnérable: espèce confrontée à un risque d'extinction élevé à moyen terme
nt = Near Threatened: species coming very close to qualifying as Vulnerable
Quasi-menacée: espèce se rapprochant de celles de la catégorie Vulnérable
DD = Data Deficient: species for which there is inadequate information to make an assessment of its risk of extinction / Insuffisamment documentée: espèce pour laquelle l'on ne dispose pas de suffisamment d'informations pour évaluer son risque d'extinction

Restricted-range species (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998):

[o] = Endemic to the Upper Guinea forest block / endémique au bloc forestier de Haute Guinée

Biome (Fishpool & Evans 2001) :

GC = Restricted to Guinea-Congo Forests biome (104 species) / confinée au biome des forêts guinéo-congolaises (104 espèces)
SG = Restricted to Sudan-Guinea Savanna biome (4 species) / confinée au biome de la savane soudano-guinéenne (4 espèces)

Habitat :

c = forest canopy / canopée
m = mid forest storey / strate moyenne de la forêt
l = lower forest storey and ground / strate inférieure de la forêt et sol
e = forest edge / lisière
r = rivers, streams and ponds / cours d'eau et mares
a = aerial and flying overhead / dans les airs et survolant le site
g = highland grassland / prairies de haute altitude
s = lowland savanna / savane de plaine

Appendix 2. Birds trapped in mist-nets

Annexe 2. Oiseaux capturés dans des filets japonais

		Highland	Lowland
1	*Turtur tympanistria*	1	
2	*Aplopeplia larvata*		1
3	*Halcyon malimbica*	1	
4	*Alcedo leuocogaster*		2
5	*Merops muelleri*		1
6	*Pogoniulus scolopaceus*		2
7	*Pogoniulus subsulphureus*		2
8	*Campethera nivosa*		1
9	*Motacilla clara*		2
10	*Andropadus virens*	1	8
11	*Andropadus latirostris*		41
12	*Baeopogon indicator*		1
13	*Chlorocichla simplex*		1
14	*Phyllastrephus icterinus*		2
15	*Bleda syndactylus*		2
16	*Bleda canicapillus*		4
17	*Criniger barbatus*		8
18	*Criniger calurus*		1
19	*Stiphrornis erythrothorax*		3
20	*Sheppardia cyornithopsis*	1	2
21	*Cossypha polioptera*	1	
22	*Cossypha niveicapilla*	1	
23	*Cossypha albicapilla*		1
24	*Alethe diademata*	1	1
25	*Alethe poliocephala*	3	2
26	*Neocossyphus poensis*	1	
27	*Cercotrichas leucosticta*		2
28	*Bathmocercus cerviniventris*		1
29	*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*	1	
30	*Schistolais leontica*	2	
31	*Camaroptera brachyura*	3	
32	*Camaroptera chloronota*		4
33	*Phylloscopus trochilus*	7	
34	*Sylvia borin*	1	
35	*Hylia prasina*		3
36	*Ficedula hypoleuca*	1	
37	*Elminia nigromitrata*		4
38	*Terpsiphone rufiventer*	1	5
39	*Dyaphorophyia blissetti*		1
40	*Dyaphorophyia concreta*		2
41	*Platysteira cyanea*	3	
42	*Illadopsis rufipennis*		6
43	*Illadopsis puveli*		2
44	*Cyanomitra obscura*	1	7
45	*Chalcomitra senegalensis*	1	
46	*Cinnyris venustus*	2	
47	*Cinnyris cupreus*	1	
48	*Zosterops senegalensis*	1	
49	*Dicrurus atripennis*		1
50	*Malimbus nitens*		4
51	*Euplectes ardens*	2	
52	*Nigrita bicolor*		2
53	*Spermophaga haematina*		5
54	*Mandingoa nitidula*	1	1
55	*Euschistospiza dybowskii*	3	
56	*Lagonosticta rubricata*	1	
	Totals	43	138

On the importance of the forest tree *Parinari excelsa* in the diet of Brown-necked Parrots *Poicephalus robustus* in Malawi–Zambia

Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire

De l'importance de l'arbre forestier *Parinari excelsa* dans le régime alimentaire des Perroquets robustes *Poicephalus robustus* au Malawi-Zambie. Le Perroquet robuste *Poicephalus robustus* de la race *suahelicus* est parfois considéré comme appartenant à une espèce distincte (*P. fuscicollis*), notamment en raison de son écologie 'savanicole'. Toutefois l'auteur rappelle qu'en Afrique centrale (Malawi-Zambie) cette population passe une partie importante de l'année à se nourrir dans les forêts de montagne, essentiellement des graines de *Parinari excelsa*. Les méthodes d'extraction des graines de *P. excelsa* et de l'espèce de savane *P. curatellifolia* sont brièvement comparées.

The Brown-necked Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* comprises three subspecies: the nominate is endemic to South Africa and is mainly restricted to montane forest (Rowan 1983, Wirminghaus *et al.* 2002a); *P. r. suahelicus* is widespread in the Zambezian savannas from Angola across to Tanzania and Mozambique, south to Zimbabwe and the Transvaal (Benson *et al.* 1988); *P. r. fuscicollis* occurs sparingly in West Africa, from Nigeria to Senegambia (Borrow & Demey 2001); whilst a small population from the forests of Cabinda and north-west Angola has been attributed to *fuscicollis* (Pinto 1983), but has also been considered intermediate between *fuscicollis* and *suahelicus* (Benson *et al.* 1988). It has been suggested recently that the nominate race might be a species, Cape Parrot, based on morphometric characters (Clancey 1997), with *suahelicus* and *fuscicollis* united in another species, the Grey-headed Parrot *P. fuscicollis* (Wirminghaus *et al.* 2002b). Sibley & Monroe (1990) have proposed two groups within *P. robustus*, and give the name Brown-necked Parrot *P. suahelicus* (1898) to the non-nominate form, overlooking the fact that *fuscicollis* (1820) pre-dates *suahelicus* by 78 years; the name *P. suahelicus* also used by Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002) is thus incorrect. An additional argument in the taxonomic debate is the difference in feeding ecology between *suahelicus* and *robustus*: the former being found mainly in savanna woodland and the latter in montane forest (Symes & Perrin 2003, Wirminghaus *et al.* 2002a,b). The feeding ecology of *P. r. fuscicollis* is virtually undescribed.

Symes & Perrin (2003) presented a review of feeding habits and food plants of the race *suahelicus* in the Transvaal (South Africa) and elsewhere; in this they stress the importance of seed crops of the savanna tree *Parinari curatellifolia*, which Brown-necked Parrots visit en masse in the post-breeding season. The authors did not, however, list the forest tree *Parinari excelsa* in their review table, although the species was mentioned as an important food plant in two earlier publications (Dowsett-Lemaire 1988, 1989). This note provides further details on the timing and regularity of movements of Brown-necked Parrots to the montane forests of Malawi and north-east Zambia when *Parinari excelsa* are fruiting; the feeding technique relating to the extraction of seeds of *P. excelsa* appears to differ from the way the smaller fruits of *P. curatellifolia* are usually tackled.

Parinari excelsa is a large evergreen tree widespread from West Africa to montane eastern Africa (Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique); it is found mainly in drier types of Guineo-Congolian rain forest, on its periphery and at higher altitudes (as on the Fouta Djalon Plateau of Guinea) and in eastern Africa is confined to Afromontane rain forest. The fruit (as in all *Parinari* species) is a drupe with a thin layer of foetid flesh covering a large woody endocarp, itself containing two seeds; each seed germinates through a hole in the endocarp. R. J. Dowsett and I were resident on the Nyika Plateau in northern Malawi and adjacent north-east Zambia from October 1979 to March 1982, and visited the area on shorter occasions in other years. *Parinari excelsa* is a fairly common 30-

m-tall tree in the forest patches of the south-western escarpment, on both sides of the international border at an altitude of 1,950–2,150 m. The fruiting season extends from November to February and massive crops are produced each year.

In 1979–1982 we observed small flocks of Brown-necked Parrots visit montane forest annually, from late November or early December to the end of January, once as late as 20 February (1982). We also noticed them on other visits, in December 1973 (RJD, flock of 25 in Chowo forest, Zambia), December 1977 (up to 20, Zambian side) and January 1983, and there have been further reports in subsequent years, as in January–February 1995 (D. Foot unpubl.). When they first appear, Brown-necked Parrots may still be feeding dependent fledglings: thus, on 24 November 1980, a pair was seen with an immature to which the female was regurgitating seeds of *Parinari excelsa*. On one occasion (February 1982) several parrots fed in a fruiting *Cola greenwayi* (the tree being underlain with broken nuts, emptied of their seeds), and in December 1979 two small groups were observed in the canopy of fruiting *Aningeria adolfi-friedericii* (feeding method not noted), otherwise all observations relate to parrots feeding in *P. excelsa*, throughout November–February. A common sight (and smell) at that time is of dozens of fallen *Parinari* fruits littering the forest floor under every tree, with flesh peeled off and rotting. Parrots peel the thin green flesh from the fruit with their bill while holding it with one foot, and then extract the two oily seeds encased inside the large woody endocarp. The ellipsoid or subspherical fruits of *P. excelsa* are very much larger than those of *P. curatellifolia*, measuring up to 4 x 6 cm; dried fruits (basically the endocarps) collected in Malawi often measure 2.5 x 4 or 5 cm, and the germination holes are at least 5–6 mm in diameter. Due to the height of the trees and density of foliage it was not possible to observe how parrots extracted the seeds from the endocarp, but examination of many fruits dropped by the birds below the tree showed each of the two seeds had apparently been taken out through the germination hole, with the woody endocarp left intact. The endocarp is extremely hard to break, as we required a hammer and a large stone in order to achieve this. Incidentally, the seeds of *Parinari* are very tasty and would no doubt be exploited by humans if there was an easier method of extracting them.

In contrast, the endocarps of fruits of *P. curatellifolia* are usually cracked open while they are still immature and soft, and this method of seed extraction is used for many other species (Symes & Perrin 2003). In some cases, however, parrots failed to crack the endocarp open, and 'the mandible was used to access two kernels [meaning seeds] through two weak points on the seed' [meaning the two germination holes in the endocarp]: p.53 in Symes & Perrin. This does not seem to differ greatly from the method apparently employed with *P. excelsa*.

The feeding ecology of *P. r. fuscicollis* in West Africa remains to be investigated, but there are many species in common between the woodlands and dry forests of West and south-central Africa that are known food plants of *P. r. suahelicus*, including both *Parinari excelsa* and *P. curatellifolia*, as well as *Adansonia digitata*, *Diospyros mespiliformis*, *Sclerocarya*, *Syzygium* spp.

To conclude, although our knowledge of the feeding requirements of the Brown-necked Parrot is still very incomplete, montane forests are evidently an important habitat for *P. r. suahelicus* at least seasonally; thus it may be premature to use the ecological argument in taxonomic discussions on the distinctiveness of the 'forest race' *P. r. robustus*.

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Unusual nests of São Tomé Weaver *Ploceus sanctithomae*

Ben Fisher

Des nids inhabituels du Tisserin de Sao Tomé *Ploceus sanctithomae*. Un nid du Tisserin de Sao Tomé *Ploceus sanctithomae* remarquablement volumineux a été collecté par l'auteur en janvier 1998 près de Lagoa Amelia, Sao Tomé. Ce nid est en forme de cornue et comporte trois entrées: un tunnel d'entrée pointant vers le bas de 17 cm de long, une entrée dans la paroi de la chambre du nid, et un deuxième tunnel, de 5 cm, en dessous de la chambre (Fig. 1). Un autre nid collecté a également une entrée de côté, mais un tunnel seulement, tandis qu'un troisième a deux tunnels mais pas d'entrée de côté. Ainsi, il apparaît que le Tisserin de Sao Tomé construit deux types de nid (un nid 'normal' et un autre à plusieurs entrées), ce qui semble être unique parmi les tisserins du genre *Ploceus*, car aucune autre espèce n'est connue pour construire un nid à plusieurs entrées. L'auteur se demande si cela, en combinaison avec la coloration terne de l'espèce et son bec long et fin, ne constituerait pas un argument pour ressusciter le genre monotypique *Thomasophantes*.

On 18 January 1998 I collected a nest of São Tomé Weaver *Ploceus sanctithomae* (hereafter nest A) on the slopes below Lagoa Amelia, São Tomé. It was suspended on its own from the branch of a tree in open secondary forest at a height of *c.*10 m. As no birds were present and the nest was empty, it was probably vacant, although if it was a roosting nest (see below) the birds would, of course, been absent. It is retort shaped with a straight, 17 cm-long tube and consists of tendrils over a layer of grey skeletal leaves. Local guides positively identified the nest as belonging to São Tomé Weaver when shown the depiction of the bird in Christy & Clarke (1998). However, the nest appears unusually bulky for a bird of its size, with the walls of the tube being at least 1 cm in diameter, and even more unusual is that it has three entrances: a normal downward-pointing tube, a hole at the side of the nest chamber, and a second tube 5 cm long below the nest chamber (Fig. 1). The side entrance appears as a pale spot because of the exposed skeletal leaves. The other three weaver species on the island have different-shaped nests: in Southern Masked *P. velatus* and Village Weaver *P. cucullatus* these are kidney shaped without an entrance tube or, in the case of the latter, only a short one (Collias & Collias 2004, Oschadleus 2004), and in Giant Weaver *P. grandis* it is a very large oval structure woven into branches and without an entrance tube (Craig 2004).

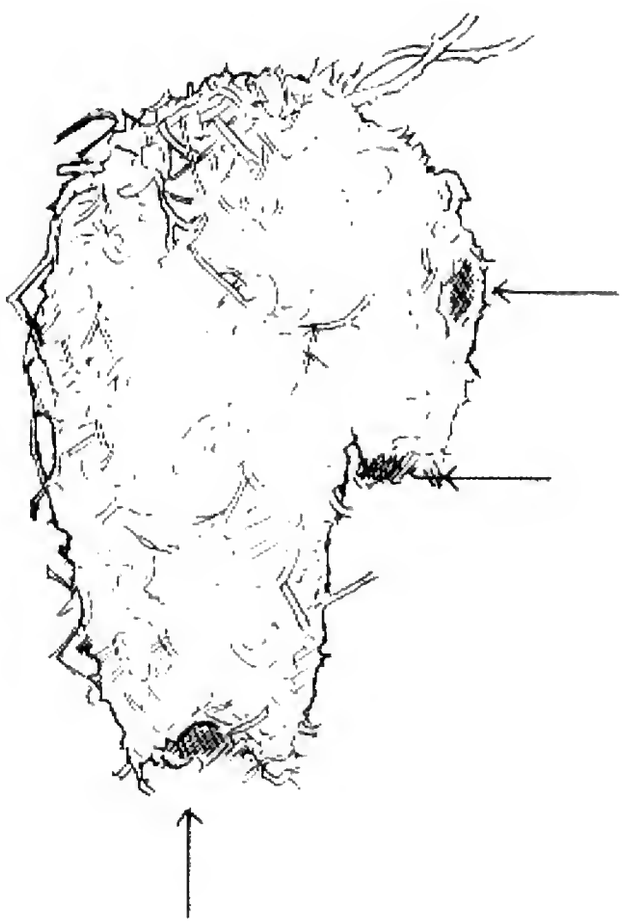

Figure 1. Nest of São Tomé Weaver *Ploceus sanctithomae* with three entrances (nest A); entrances indicated by arrows (Martin Woodcock)

Nid du Tisserin de Sao Tomé *Ploceus sanctithomae* comportant trois entrées, indiquées par des flèches (Martin Woodcock)

I collected two other, old, nests of São Tomé Weaver (B and C), suspended *c.*4 m above ground. Nest B also has a side entrance, which was clearly visible from the ground, but only one tube entrance. Nest C has two tube entrances but no side entrance, although there appears to be the beginnings of one. Because of the age of these nests the tubes may have been lost, or the nests may not have been completed. Given their compact structure, it is highly unlikely that the side entrance would be the result of damage.

An early description of the nest of this species by Bocage, quoted by Bannerman (1949), described the nest as 'communal...the various cavities united by a common passage'. No mention is made of a second or third entrance, but one wonders whether Bocage made his 'communal' assumption because he saw birds entering and leaving by different entrances. No subsequent authors mention the nest being communal. Snow (1950) was given a nest—'round with a funnel pointing downwards'—with apparently no unusual features, and de Naurois' (1994) description of the exit tube being like the opening of a trumpet does not tally with my nest A. Dissecting nest B (with a single tube entrance) revealed a single chamber, as expected. Nests A and C (with two tube entrances) have the 'nest chamber' above the second tube and may be roosting nests only. These could indeed be 'communal'. All this appears to indicate that São Tomé Weaver constructs two types of nest.

No other species within the genus *Ploceus* is known to have a nest with more than one entrance, nor a separate roosting nest (Fry & Keith 2004). Little intraspecific variation in nest structure has been detected and this appears to be confined to materials used, type of suspension and length of tube; none of these are considered fundamental (Crook 1963). Thus, the nesting habits of São Tomé Weaver may prove to be unique and this may perhaps, together with the bird's subdued plumage colouration and long, fine bill (characters put forward by previous authors), constitute rationale to return the species to the monotypic genus *Thomasophantes*. Hopefully, this note may encourage others to study breeding birds and to elucidate the questions raised by the multiple-entry nests.

Acknowledgements

I thank Rita Covas, Ron Demey, Robert J. Dowsett, Martim Melo and Alan Tye for their comments on a draft of this note and Martin Woodcock for his illustration. I also thank my son Roland for accompanying me, as without his enthusiasm and knowledge of Portuguese the nest would never have been collected.

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Rameron Pigeons *Columba arquatrix* drinking and bathing

Giles Mulholland

Des Pigeons rameron *Columba arquatrix* venant boire et se baigner. L'auteur rapporte des observations, faites de 1998 à 2003, de Pigeons rameron *Columba arquatrix* venant boire et se baigner dans un étang artificiel d'un jardin de Bryanston, une banlieue de Johannesbourg, Afrique du Sud. Occasionellement, des oiseaux se posaient même directement au milieu de l'étang, se baignaient et 'nageaient' jusqu'à 2 m, leurs mouvements semblant indiquer qu'ils utilisaient leurs pattes. On sait que de nombreuses espèces de pigeon se baignent quand elles en ont l'occasion, mais cela ne semble pas encore avoir été décrit pour le Pigeon rameron et la 'nage' semble être inhabituelle.

Although pigeons need water to moisten and help digest their food (del Hoyo *et al.* 1997) and most drink regularly (Goodwin 1983), Rameron Pigeon *Columba arquatrix* is said to drink only rarely (Rowan 1983, Urban *et al.* 1986) and bathing appears to be undocumented. According to Rowan (1983), 'Oatley remarks that he has never seen a Rameron Pigeon come to water, despite many hours spent in hides beside pools in forests where the birds were present'. This note documents casual observations over five years (1998–2003) of Rameron Pigeons drinking and bathing in a garden in Bryanston, a suburb of northern Johannesburg, South Africa.

Observations

The garden contains two ponds connected by a 2-m rocky waterfall. The upper pond, which measures *c.*3 x 3 m and is 1 m deep in the centre, contains a few water-lilies and a small clump of *Cyperus* reeds in a corner, and is surrounded by slate tiles, providing a low lip and excellent visibility all around.

Rameron Pigeons started arriving one hour after sunrise, in singles, pairs, small groups of 3–4 or flocks of up to 15, but most waited until at least two hours after sunrise. The next two hours were a peak drinking period. A few pigeons (usually singles or groups of 2–3) continued to visit the pond throughout the remainder of the day, with a noticeable increase *c.*1–2 hours before sunset. Overall, *c.*100–150 birds visited the pond every day. As their drinking frequency is unknown, it is possible that birds did not drink daily.

The pigeons invariably first perched in a half-dead *Saphora japonica* tree 5 m away from the upper pool, where they waited for 30 seconds to several minutes before descending to drink. Those that had arrived in a group usually returned to the tree after drinking, until all members of the group had finished, before flying off. Singles or pairs usually flew off directly after drinking. Birds descended singly or in twos or threes to the spot around the lip of the top of the waterfall, where up to 10 congregated. Some perched on the rocks beside the stream and bent down to reach the water 15 cm below. The majority moved to the pond's slate edge, from where some drank, while others (30%) hopped onto the lip of the waterfall (an area of *c.*40 x 40 cm, where the water was only 4 cm deep). Those that drank from the slate usually immersed their bill almost up to their eyes (Fig. 1), whereas those that stood in the water at the lip usually submerged most of the breast while drinking (Fig. 2).

Many pigeons (*c.*15%) took the opportunity to bathe. This was usually affected by jumping from the slate to the lip of the waterfall, from where they lowered themselves into the water, ruffled their feathers and flapped their wings (Fig. 3). They usually submerged themselves so that at least half of their body was underwater, maintaining this position for up to 30 seconds. Sometimes, they 'pushed off' from the bank and swam out for up to 1 m (Fig. 4) before taking off directly from the water after up to 10 seconds. After bathing, they only occasionally preened, on the slate or in the tree. A few instances were observed—invariably when several birds were bathing already—where a bird landed directly in the middle of the pond, bathed and 'swam' for up to 20 seconds before taking off. Pigeons sometimes 'swam' for up

to 2 m, and their body movements suggested they used their feet when doing so.

Discussion

Rowan (1983) suggested that Rameron Pigeons, which take a variety of fruits of indigenous and exotic trees (Rowan 1983, Urban *et al.* 1986), under ordinary conditions obtain the water they require from their food. In the Johannesburg area, their diet during the long dry season perhaps includes a high proportion of dry fruit, requiring a higher water intake. However, I did not observe any clear seasonal (winter or summer) differences in drinking or bathing, nor in different temperature (0–30°C) or wind conditions (calm to very windy). Other observers in Johannesburg, responding to requests from the SABirdnet Internet forum, only reported occasional drinking by Rameron Pigeons (rarely more than single observations). The paucity of records appears to suggest that birds fly long distances to only a small number of widely scattered drinking sites.

Although many pigeon species are known to bathe when they have access to suitable water (Goodwin 1983), bathing of Rameron Pigeons does not seem to have been described before and the behaviour ('swimming') appears to be unusual. Red-eyed Doves *Streptopelia semitorquata*, which often drank in association with the Rameron Pigeons, occasionally bathed too, but none was ever observed 'swimming'. Ring-necked *S. capicola* and Laughing Doves *S. senegalensis* came to drink, but were never observed bathing. Speckled Pigeons *Columba guinea*, which also occasionally visited the garden, were not observed to drink.

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Captions to figures on page 146

Figures 1–4. Rameron Pigeons *Columba arquatrix* drinking and bathing, Bryanston, Johannesburg, South Africa (Giles Mulholland)

Pigeons rameron *Columba arquatrix* venant boire et se baigner, Bryanston, Johannesbourg, Afrique du Sud (Giles Mulholland)

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Captions are on page 145

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* in Senegal in December 2003

Richard Cruse

Un Pouillot à grands sourcils *Phylloscopus inornatus* au Sénégal en décembre 2003. Un Pouillot à grands sourcils *Phylloscopus inornatus* a été observé près de St Louis, au nord du Sénégal, le 6 décembre 2003, dans une ronde d'insectivores. Ceci constitue la première mention documentée pour l'Afrique sub-Saharienne. Urban *et al.* (1997) mentionnent un oiseau bagué à Podor en septembre 1987, également dans le nord sénégalais, mais les détails n'ont jamais été publiés. L'espèce niche en Sibérie et hiverne principalement en Asie du Sud et du Sud-est; toutefois, elle atteint régulièrement l'Europe et le Moyen Orient. Elle est accidentelle en Afrique du Nord et dans les Îles Canaries. Un afflux record a eu lieu en Europe occidentale à l'automne 2003, ce qui pourrait expliquer la présence de l'espèce au Sénégal.

In the morning of 6 December 2003, Richard & Jan Brown, John Isaac and I were birding the tree-lined tracks alongside the banks of a tributary of the Senegal River near St Louis in northern Senegal. Conditions were clear and sunny. We found a mixed-species flock feeding in the *Acacia* and *Tamarix* trees, containing Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*, Western Olivaceous Warbler *H.* [*pallida*] *opaca* and Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura*. While watching the chiffchaff I noticed another small *Phylloscopus* and pointed it out to my companions. The bird was quite conspicuous as it had two bright yellow wingbars. It was noticeably smaller than the chiffchaff and had a greenish head and upperparts, with a long, bright yellow supercilium, no noticeable crown-stripe, and dirty whitish underparts. The primaries appeared dark. We watched it for a short time before the flock moved off, not to be seen again. We identified the bird as Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus*. The close proximity of the chiffchaff made the identification relatively easy. A few weeks previously I had seen a Yellow-browed Warbler in the hand at a ringing station in Estonia. Furthermore, I observed a similar warbler, with conspicuous double wingbars, in nearby Djoudj National Park, Senegal, on 25 November 2002, but as the views were very brief, I was unable to claim it.

Yellow-browed Warbler is not mentioned for Senegal in Morel & Morel (1990), nor in the more recent identification guides of Barlow *et al.* (1997) and Borrow & Demey (2001). Urban *et al.* (1997) mentioned one ringed by J. Betlem at Podor, in northern Senegal, in September 1987, but no details have been published. The present sighting thus appears to be the first detailed record of this Siberian passerine from sub-Saharan Africa. It normally winters in southern Asia, but regularly reaches Europe and the Near East, mostly in mid-September and October (Cramp 1992), with pronounced influxes in some years. It is a vagrant to North Africa, with records from Egypt (two, October 1966 and 1969; one, March 1982: Goodman & Meininger 1989), Libya (one, November 1967: Bundy 1976), Algeria (three, October 1985: Isenmann & Moali 2000), Morocco (singles, November 1988 and October 1994: Thévenot *et al.* 2003), and the Canary Islands (13 records, November–March, on Lanzarote, Fuerteventura and Tenerife, in 1978–1997: Martin & Lorenzo 2001).

There was a record influx of Yellow-browed Warblers in western Europe in autumn 2003, with unprecedented numbers reported in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, France and Britain (van den Berg 2003, 2004), and this may also explain the species' presence in Senegal during the same general period. It seems plausible to suggest that Yellow-browed Warblers passing through Western Europe could migrate with Common Chiffchaffs to the Sahel.

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Little-known African bird:
Gabela Akalat, Angola's long-neglected *Gabelatrix*

Michael Mills[a,b], Callan Cohen[a,b] and Claire Spottiswoode[b,c]

Un oiseau africain peu connu: le Rougegorge de Gabela, le *Gabelatrix* longtemps négligé de l'Angola. Le Rougegorge de Gabela *Sheppardia gabela*, découvert en 1954 dans une forèt de l'escarpement angolais près de Gabela, a connu une histoire taxonomique mouvementée et après avoir été inclus successivement dans les genres *Muscicapa* et *Erithacus*, il a même été proposé qu'il méritait son propre sous-genre *Gabelatrix*. Sa biologie demeure peu connue et ses vocalisations ne sont pas connues du tout. Les deux dernières années, cette espèce menacée a été observée à plusieurs reprises et son aire de distribution connue a été étendue vers le sud jusqu'à 10 km à l'est de Seles. Deux individus ont également été vus à 8 km au sud de Conda, à 990 m et 810 m d'altitude, tandis que tous les sites où des spécimens ont été prélevés dans le passé se trouvent à environ 1100 m ou au-delà. Il semble probable que la superficie de l'habitat du Rougegorge de Gabela ait augmenté pendant la guerre, mais une reprise des plantations commerciales sur l'escarpement pourrait de nouveau menacer l'espèce, ainsi que les autres espèces d'oiseaux endémiques.

Over the past three decades, western Angola's scarp forests have attained mythical status amongst birders, ornithologists and conservationists, with a debilitating civil war keeping almost all at bay (see p. 152). The escarpment proper supports 11 restricted-range species (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998), amongst them a small, unobtrusive and poorly known forest robin currently regarded as Endangered (BirdLife International 2000).

The Gabela Akalat *Sheppardia gabela* has enjoyed an eventful taxonomic history since its discovery near the escarpment town of Gabela by Gerd Heinrich in 1954 (Rand 1957). It was initially described as a flycatcher in the genus *Muscicapa* because of its olivaceous-brown plumage, broad-based bill, numerous, pronounced rictal bristles, and weak legs and feet (Rand 1957, Hall 1961). Following a brief stint as a congener of the European Robin, in *Erithacus*, closer examination revealed long tarsi and traces of orange pigment on some underparts feathers, leading it to be reclassified as a *Sheppardia* akalat, a genus of understorey robins that exhibits some convergent features with flycatchers, such as rictal bristles (Irwin & Clancey 1974, Clancey 1977). Still perplexed by the bird's uniqueness, Clancey (1977) went so far as to suggest that it deserved its own subgenus, *Gabelatrix*! A recently published molecular phylogenetic study by Pamela Beresford (Beresford 2003), using genetic material taken from museum specimens, certainly supports its status as an akalat (albeit a polyphyletic grouping, she also reveals). Interestingly, however, this study reveals that it is mostly closely related to the Central African 'orange-bellied' Lowland *S. cyornithopsis* and Equatorial Akalats *S. aequatorialis*, not to the two 'brown' akalats of Tanzania, as one might be tempted superficially to assume, given its dull plumage. The behaviour and shape are certainly typical of other akalats: it is a small, squat bird with a large head, and feeds unobtrusively in dense forest understorey, gleaning insects from foliage and branches.

Since its discovery, little of its natural history has been revealed. Four additional specimens have been collected, all from the surroundings of Gabela, suggesting that it has a range of less than 1,000 km^2 (Hall & Moreau 1962), whilst a sighting was made near Conda in the 1970s (Collar & Stuart 1985), and during an all-too-brief-ceasefire in the early 1990s, the bird was observed three times in two days in coffee/forest edge by a team from the former International Council for Bird Preservation (Hawkins 1993, Collar *et al.* 1994). Nothing is known concerning the species' breeding, although Pinto collected it in breeding condi-

Gabela Akalat *Sheppardia gabela*, Kumbira Forest, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)
Rougegorge de Gabela *Sheppardia gabela*, Forêt de Kumbira, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

tion in September (Dean 2000). Its voice remains unknown.

Several sightings have been made of this species in the more peaceful last two years. For example, during *c.*20 hours of observations in the scarp forests of Cuanza Sul province in October 2003 we recorded three Gabela Akalats, supporting the suggestion that they are not uncommon in suitable habitat (Oatley & Arnott 1998). Our first sighting was *c.*10 km east of Seles, along the road to Sumbe (11°22'S 14°13'E; 900 m). Surprisingly, the bird was moving through low dense second growth, without any canopy, close to a road verge. This constitutes a southern extension of the reported range, the previous southernmost record being from Assango (11°04'S 14°32'E). We also recorded two individuals near the village of Kumbira One, 8 km south of Conda. One was observed at 990 m in stunted primary forest with a dense and rocky understorey near the forest edge, just below the treeline, and the other, illustrated here, was mist-netted in regenerating coffee forest at 11°08'S 14°17'E, at 810 m. Although few altitude records exist for the species, all collection sites (see Dean 2000) were roughly at or above 1,100 m, suggesting that our lowest record constitutes an extension of Gabela Akalat's known altitudinal range.

An estimated 95% of Angola's escarpment forests has been cleared for coffee since the 1930s (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998), but it seems likely that over the past 30 years the amount of suitable habitat available to the Gabela Akalat has increased, as civil war forced out commercial farmers and permitted the understorey of untended shaded coffee plantations to run wild. Still, subsistence agriculture must pose an increasingly severe threat (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998). With the return of peace there are suggestions that commercial activities will also resume on the Angolan escarpment and, as dis-

cussed on p. 159 of this issue, a further threat to Angola's endemics may thus be revived. A conservation strategy for the area requires urgent implementation, before other developments take hold.

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Birding western Angola

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Observer les oiseaux en Angola occidental. Après avoir été inaccessible pendant pratiquement trente ans à cause de la guerre civile qui a ravagé le pays suite au départ des Portugais en 1974, certaines parties de l'Angola occidental peuvent à nouveau être visitées par des ornithologues. Les auteurs, qui ont effectué un nombre de courtes visites entre mars 2001 et novembre 2003, présentent les sites relativement sûrs et accessibles le long de l'escarpement occidental et la plaine côtière avoisinante, notamment le Parc national de Quiçama (Province de Bengo), la zone de Gabela (Cuanza Sul), le Mont Moco (Huambo) et Tundavala (Huila). Cette région comprend une Zone d'Endémisme d'Oiseaux qui compte 14 espèces à répartition restreinte, dont 12 sont menacées, et plusieurs espèces quasi-endémiques. Parmi les premières, les auteurs ont pu observer 12 des 14 espèces, dont le Francolin à bandes grises *Francolinus griseostriatus*, le Rougegorge de Gabela *Sheppardia gabela*, le Cossyphe des grottes *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*, le Nasique de Pulitzer *Macrosphenus pulitzeri*, le Gobemouche de l'Angola *Melaenornis brunneus*, le Pririt à front blanc *Platysteira albifrons*, le Gladiateur de Monteiro *Malaconotus monteiri*, le Gonolek de l'Angola *Laniarius amboimensis*, et le Bagadais de Gabela *Prionops gabela*. Des renseignements sont également fournis sur d'autres espèces locales intéressantes, telles que le Touraco pauline *Tauraco erythrolophus*, le Coliou à dos marron *Colius castanotus*, et le Souimanga d'Oustalet *Cinnyris oustaleti*.

Angola is one of Africa's most diverse countries, with habitats ranging from the gravel plains of the Namib, one of the world's driest deserts, to the rainforests of Cabinda and the Congo Basin. As a result, it supports a wealth of birds, with a country list of at least 920 species (Dean 2000, Dean *et al.* 2002). For birders the key attraction is the 14 range-restricted species that define the Western Angola Endemic Bird Area (Dean 2001), and several other near-endemics. These species have been inaccessible for much of the last three decades due to the protracted civil war that erupted in 1974, following the withdrawal of the Portuguese. Many of these key species are restricted to fragments of scarp and Afromontane forest scattered in the highland area of western Angola (Hall 1960). Given the lack of recent information concerning the status of these species, 12 of the 14 range-restricted species are listed as globally threatened (BirdLife International 2000).

The western highlands of Angola rise abruptly from a narrow coastal plain, and are isolated to the east by the vast, predominantly miombo-covered central plateau. They reach their highest point at Mt Moco, Angola's tallest peak, at 2,582 m, and are characterised by spectacular inselbergs. Dense woodland cloaks the

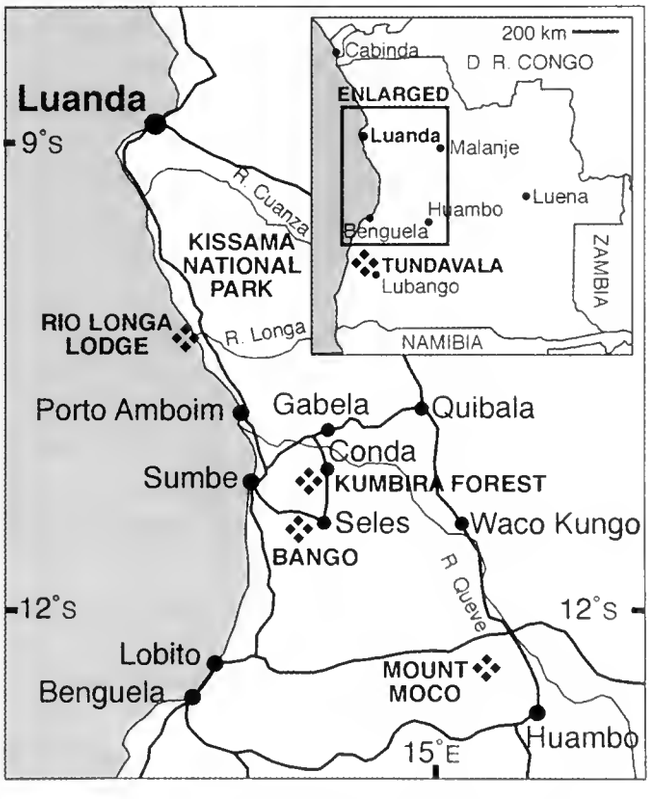

Figure 1. Sites in western Angola described in the text.
Sites en Angola occidental présentés dans cet article.

lower slopes of the scarp, with a mosaic of grassland, open woodland and forest on the higher peaks. In addition to the many endemics, the highland forests are of considerable biogeographic interest as they support populations of many species otherwise restricted to the Afromontane forests that extend along the highland chain from Eritrea and the Albertine Rift, through the Eastern Arc Mountains to the Cape. Many of the isolated Angolan populations are quite distinctive (e.g. **Yellow-bellied Waxbill** *Coccopygia quartinia bocagei*, **Bronzy Sunbird** *Nectarinia kilimensis gadowi*) and future research may well prove them to be species, boosting the area's number of endemics.

The coastal lowlands are also well worth birding. The coastal plain grades from desert in the extreme south, through arid *Euphorbia* scrub with dwarf baobabs, to mesic savanna and woodland in the north. It provides an intriguing array of birds, mixing species characteristic of the south-west arid zone with others more typical of the West African littoral. The entire mix is spiced-up by a few species virtually restricted to Angola, notably **Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush** *Cichladusa ruficauda*, **White-fronted Wattle-eye** *Platysteira albifrons*, **Golden-backed Bishop** *Euplectes aureus* and **Cinderella Waxbill** *Estrilda thomensis*, although the wattle-eye and waxbill also occur higher up the scarp at some sites.

The avifauna of western Angola is fairly well documented, through extensive collections by Dr A. A. da Rosa Pinto and the British Museum expedition led by B. P. Hall. Sadly, the golden days (for ornithology) of the 1950s and 1960s ended abruptly in 1974, when civil war effectively curtailed further exploration. BirdLife International made a valiant effort to assess the state of the escarpment forests and to commence a conservation programme during the 1992 ceasefire, but were thwarted by the latter's short duration. Much of our knowledge of the avifauna, based largely on specimen data, has been recently summarised (Dean 2000). However, the death of the UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi, in February 2002 resulted in a more lasting peace, once again permitting adventurous birders access to at least parts of Angola.

In this article, we describe birding at sites known to be relatively safe and accessible along the western scarp and adjacent coastal plain (Fig. 1). The information is based on a series of short visits to Kissama National Park, Bengo Province (IS in March 2001, May 2002, RC in November 2003), the Gabela area of Cuanza Sul (IS and PR in February 2003, CS, CC and MM in October 2003, and RC in November 2003), Mt Moco in Huambo Province (RC in November 2003) and Tundavala in Huila Province (RC in October 2003).

Captions to plates on pages 154 & 155

Figure 1. Lagoon at Rio Longa Lodge, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode) / Lagune près du Rio Longa Lodge, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 2. Highlands around Conda, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode) / Zone de haute altitude aux environs de Conda, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 3. Angola Cave Chat *Xenocopsychus ansorgei* habitat, Mount Njelo, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode) Habitat du Cossyphe des grottes *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*, Mont Njelo, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 4. Angola Cave Chat / Cossyphe des grottes *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figures 5–6. Kumbira Forest, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode) / Forêt de Kumbira, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 7. Pulitzer's Longbill *Macrosphenus pulitzeri*, near Bango, west of Seles, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode) Nasique de Pulitzer *Macrosphenus pulitzeri*, près de Bango, à l'ouest de Seles, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 8. Forest Scrub Robin / Agrobate du Ghana *Cercotrichas leucosticta*, Kumbira Forest, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 9. Falkenstein's Greenbul / Bulbul de Falkenstein *Chlorocichla falkensteini*, Kumbira Forest, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 10. Brown-chested Alethe / Alèthe à poitrine brune *Alethe poliocephala*, Kumbira Forest, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 11. Angola Slaty Flycatcher / Gobemouche de l'Angola *Melaenornis brunneus*, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 12. Red-backed Mousebird / Coliou à dos marron *Colius castanotus*, Angola (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 13. Monteiro's Bush-shrike / Gladiateur de Monteiro *Malaconotus monteiri*, Angola (Callan Cohen)

Captions are on page 153

Luanda and Kissama National Park

Most birders are likely to access the country via Luanda. This sprawling capital city, home to some five million people (almost half the country's population), lies on the coast 900 km south of the equator. It offers few birding opportunities, but the large brown swifts breeding in buildings along the waterfront probably are **Fernando Po Swifts** *Apus* [*barbatus*] *sladeniae*, an extremely poorly known species only recorded from a few localities in Angola, Bioko and the highlands of south-west Cameroon. Luanda Bay, and the vast lagoon formed by Mussulo peninsula that extends 37 km south-west of the city, are worth a look for the many waders and other waterbirds. The southern end is especially productive and can be viewed from the main road south.

Kissama National Park (often spelled Quiçama), 75 km south of Luanda, has been open to tourists for the last few years. It lies on the coastal plain between the Kissama and Longa rivers, and is a good base to see most of the coastal plain species. Probably the best birding is in riparian forest and thicket, concentrated along the main rivers, which is home to several Angolan endemics, including **Red-backed Mousebird** *Colius castanotus* and **White-fronted Wattle-eye**, as well as near-endemics such as the scarce **Pale Olive Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus fulviventris* and more abundant **Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush**. **Angola Batis** *Batis minulla* and **Swamp Boubou** *Laniarius bicolor* also occur in the riparian corridors, whereas **Bubbling Cisticola** *Cisticola bulliens* is common in a broad range of habitats throughout. Watch out overhead for '**Loanda' Swift** *Apus* [*horus*] *toulsoni*, especially along the large rivers. **Brown Sunbird** *Anthreptes gabonicus* occurs in mangroves at the mouth of the Kissama River, considerably further south than previously thought. Some of the larger gallery forests nearer the interior of the park also support small numbers of **Red-crested Turacos** *Tauraco erythrolophus*, but this species is much easier found elsewhere. The real star of the show is the **Grey-striped Francolin** *Francolinus griseostriatus*, which is locally common, but rather elusive. The best way to see one is to employ a local guide from the park's main camp. They imitate the bird's whistling call, and either lure them into the open from the dense grass or at least ensure a view as the birds flush. Accommodation is also available at Rio Longa Lodge on the southern border of the park.

Kissama may also provide birders with the stunning **Golden-backed Bishop**, but failing this it can be looked for further south along the Gabela road that runs inland along the Keve (or Cuvo) River, or still further south along the road from Tsumbe to Seles. Small flocks occur in well-grassed savannas and in rank vegetation at the margins of wetlands, but they are easily overlooked if the males are not in breeding plumage. **Slender-billed Weavers** *Ploceus pelzelni* also are fairly common along the floodplain of the Keve River. Some arid-country species, more typically associated with northern Namibia, also occur in Kissama. **Rüppell's Parrot** *Poicephalus rueppellii* is quite common, but other species apparently reach their northern limit further south on the coastal plain, including **Bare-cheeked Babbler** *Turdoides gymnogenys*, which is unknown north of Sumbe (Dean 2000).

Gabela

For birders, Gabela is one of the most recognisable Angolan names, with three bird species taking their names from the small town: **Gabela Akalat** *Sheppardia gabela*, **Gabela Bush-shrike** *Laniarius amboimensis* and **Gabela Helmet-shrike** *Prionops gabela*. All three are confined to a small area of western Cuanza Sul Province. The town is reached from the main coastal road via a rather indifferent tarmac road that runs inland from a point *c.*20 km north of Sumbe and follows the Keve River. Shortly after crossing the spectacular Keve Falls, the road degenerates as it starts to ascend the escarpment, chewed up by the procession of heavy trucks carrying agricultural produce to Luanda. The road passes through some fairly impressive-looking forest, which supports a reasonable diversity of forest species, but apparently few of the key endemics. This forest peters out before Gabela town. Further exploration may well locate other remnant patches, but we found the best area to be Kumbira Forest, reached by turning south to Conda at mile 17 on the Gabela Road.

Kumbira

Kumbira Forest cloaks the western flank of Njelo Mountain, a long rocky ridge running south-west of Conda. The forest, most of which was selectively logged prior to the civil war, is at 800–1,000 m elevation, above which the slopes are covered in lightly treed grassland interspersed with rocky outcrops. Below the forest is a mixture of subsistence agriculture and now-derelict shade-coffee plantations. This site supports all the Western Angolan scarp endemics except **Swierstra's Francolin** *Francolinus swierstrai* and **Braun's Bush-shrike** *Laniarius brauni*. It is reached from Conda, along a track that leaves Conda on its north-west side and skirts the northern end of Njelo Mountain. The track enters secondary forest and abdandoned coffee plantations after *c.*5 km, and reaches the village of Kumbira Primero (11°08'S 14°17'E) after 8 km. Here, it is advised to hire a guide to navigate the labyrinthine network of footpaths and old plantation tracks through the forest. With permission from the local villagers, it is possible to camp in the forest.

Gabela Bush-shrike is common, occurring in even quite degraded farmbush. It is best located by its frog-like *wor-worrrk* call, superficially similar to the closely related **Luhder's Bush-shrike** *Laniarius luehderi*. It is just one of a suite of bush-shrikes in the area, which includes the commonly heard **Perrin's Bush-shrike** *Telophorus viridis* and surprisingly common **Monteiro's Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus monteiri* (given the paucity of previous records). Monteiro's Bush-shrike is thinly distributed, but several males were heard calling in habitats ranging from near-pristine forest to quite degraded secondary scrub. One needs to check the plumage features (pale lores, dark eye) separating this species from **Grey-headed Bush-shrike** *M. blanchoti*, which also has been collected in the Gabela District and whose call is virtually identical (although we didn't encounter any in the area). **Gabela Helmet-shrike** was not found in the main forest, but a party was seen 12 km beyond Kumbira village, in dense woodland. It is perhaps best sought at lower elevations.

Gabela Akalat occurs in small numbers in the forest and adjacent old coffee plantations. Like most akalats, it is easily overlooked. In the rainy season it was located by its simple, rather low-pitched, three or four-note whistle. **Pale Olive Greenbul**, an Angolan near-endemic, also is easily overlooked unless one is attuned to its soft *prrt prrt* calls and querulous, nasal *where-er-er* song. It appears to be thinly distributed in dense secondary growth as well as in less-disturbed forest higher up the mountain. **Red-crested Turacos** are much easier to see as they bound through the remnant canopy. They are common, the forest ringing with their raucous choruses. The endemic **Hartert's Camaroptera** *Camaroptera* [*brevicaudata*] *harterti* also is common throughout the forest, whereas **Red-backed Mousebird** is confined to more open habitats at the forest edge. **Grey-striped Francolins** occur around the forest fringe, but are shy and retiring.

The forest also supports several birds with localised ranges in west-central Africa. The handsome **Falkenstein's Greenbul** *Chlorocichla falkensteini* is abundant in secondary bush, and its nasal call is heard continuously. **Angola Batis** is quite common, often occurring in bird parties with **African Blue Flycatchers** *Elminia longicauda*, and **Yellow-bellied** *Hyliota flavigaster* and **Southern Hyliotas** *H. australis*. **Yellow-throated Nicator** *Nicator vireo* the smallest of the nicators, is arguably also the most attractive. There are also several subspecies endemic to the Angolan scarp, including isolated populations of **Dusky Tit** *Parus funereus gabela*, **Forest Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas leucosticta reichenowi*, **Naked-faced Barbet** *Gymnobucco calvus vernayi* and **Brown-chested Alethe** *Alethe poliocephala hallae*. The drab local form of **Hairy-breasted Barbet** *Tricholaema hirsuta angolensis* was a minor southerly range extension.

Other, more widespread forest species present include **Yellowbill** *Ceuthmochares aereus*, **Yellow-billed Barbet** *Trachyphonus purpuratus*, **Buff-spotted** *Campethera nivosa* and **Brown-eared Woodpeckers** *C. caroli*, **African Broadbill** *Smithornis capensis*, **Petit's Cuckoo-shrike** *Campephaga petiti*, **Slender-billed Greenbul** *Andropadus gracilirostris*, **Brown Illadopsis** *Illadopsis fulvescens*, **Rufous Flycatcher Thrush** *Neocossyphus fraseri*, **Buff-throated Apalis** *Apalis rufogularis*, **Green Crombec** *Sylvietta virens*, **Green Hylia** *Hylia prasina*, **Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher** *Trochocercus nitens*, **Rufous-**

vented Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone rufocinerea*, Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophyia concreta*, Pink-footed Puffback *Dryoscopus angolensis*, Superb Sunbird *Cinnyris superba* and Grey-headed Negrofinch *Nigrita canicapillus*. Mackinnon's Shrike *Lanius mackinnoni* occurs in the adjacent farmbush.

Venturing above 900 m into less-disturbed (though almost certainly historically logged) forest, Pulitzer's Longbill *Macrosphenus pulitzeri* is best located by its repetitive, three-note call. This drab warbler is not particularly shy and can readily be seen moving through the mid-strata. Its most striking feature is its powder-blue eye. Above *c.*1,000 m, the forest is replaced by sparsely wooded grassland, with forest confined to protected gullies. Along this forest edge we found a family party of Angola Slaty Flycatchers *Melaenornis brunneus*, flitting among emergent forest trees and adjacent shrubs. Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris ludovicensis* also occurs at this elevation, replacing the Olive-bellied Sunbird *C. chloropygius* found lower down. But the main reason for slogging above the forest is to find the enigmatic Angola Cave Chat *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*, which perches on the lichen-encrusted rocks, superficially resembling a chat, but with a much longer tail. The male utters an ethereal, echoing call lasting two seconds, repeated in bouts of up to five minutes. Other species found at these elevations include Rockrunner *Achaetops damarensis* and Oustalet's Sunbird *Cinnyris oustaleti*.

Access by car is only reliably possible during the dry season (April–late October). During the rains, sections of the road from Conda become quagmires, impassable to all but the largest-wheeled vehicles. The forest can still be reached on foot from Conda or by requesting a lift on a local tractor. Walking in can be rewarding, as the more open areas near Conda have Compact Weaver *Pachyphantes superciliosus* and, once in the farmbush, one is entertained by the many Pale-billed Firefinches *Lagonosticta* [*rubricata*] *landanae*, Grey Waxbills *Estrilda perreini* and Black-and-white Mannikins *Spermestes bicolor* and smaller numbers of Red-faced Crimsonwings *Cryptospiza reichenovii* and Red-headed Bluebills *Spermophaga ruficapilla* that feed on seeds along the edge of the road. When asking directions, take care to specify Kumbira Primera, as there is a second Kumbira village lying farther south on the road to Seles, below a spectacular granite inselberg on the eastern flank of Njelo Mountain. The latter site has little forest, but did produce a pair of Dusky Twinspots *Euschistospiza cinereovinacea*.

Seles (Oku)

If Kumbira is inaccessible, many of the birds found there occur along the road from Sumbe to Seles. During 2003 this road was in much better condition than that to Gabela, and one could be birding within two hours of leaving Sumbe. We mostly birded around Bango (11°21'S 14°13'E), a small village 14 km west of Seles. Several unprepossessing patches of secondary bush around Bango support a surprisingly fine selection of birds including large numbers of Pulitzer's Longbills, at least some Gabela Akalats, as well as Red-crested Turacos and White-fronted Wattle-eyes. Lower down, west of Bango, the road passes through some good-looking forest and dense woodland that may well contain Gabela Helmet-shrike. Seles can also be reached directly from Conda, although the road is convoluted, passing via the village of Ganja, and a local guide or interpreter is essential.

Mombolo and Mt Moco

Paging through Dean's (2000) *Birds of Angola*, Mombolo features prominently for a number of sought-after species, it being the type locality for Swierstra's Francolin. On the map, it looks deceptively close to Seles, but the road south is extremely poor. An attempt to reach Mombolo was abandoned at Atòme, after travelling all day from Seles, because of reports that the road to the south was still mined. Atòme was a former UNITA base, and the area from here south to Huambo apparently still contains many mines. However, Huambo can be reached from Lobito (along another poor road), allowing access to Mt Moco. RC spent two nights camped near the base of Mount Moca on the old road that passes the eastern side of the mountain. The turn-off from the main Huambo–Lobito road is easily overlooked (12°19'S 15°08'E), and is 1 km west of a turning to a small village. One can drive to *c.*1,750 m, 5 km north of the moun-

tain. From there it was an easy walk through miombo woodland and subsistence farms to the plateau at 2,100 m.

Much of the miombo woodland is in good condition, supporting a wide variety of birds, including **Blue Quail** *Coturnix* [*chinensis*] *adansonii*, **Rufous-bellied Tit** *Parus rufiventris*, **Green-capped Eremomela** *Eremomela scotops* and **Oustalet's Sunbird**. Above 1,900 m the miombo is gradually replaced by grasslands, with small patches of Afromontane forest. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time to thoroughly search for **Swierstra's Francolin**, because of the time spent exploring access to the mountain. Some of the interesting birds observed at higher elevations included **Angola Lark** *Mirafra angolensis*, **Red-crested Turaco**, **Scarce Swift** *Schoutedenapus myoptilus* and the local races of **Bronzy Sunbird** and **Yellow-bellied Waxbill**.

Tundavala

This site is much further south than the other areas discussed here, and is probably beyond the range of most birders flying into Luanda. However, it is conveniently situated for birders driving into Angola from Namibia. Several pairs of **Angola Cave Chats** occupy the rocky outcrops, and **Angola Slaty Flycatcher** occurs along the margins of the few small forest patches. Tundavala lies *c.*16 km from Lubango on a very good road that runs past the brewery (turn at 14°55'S 13°28'E). One can camp at the picnic site in the sole remaining area of miombo woodland. Because of its close proximity to Lubango, the forest has been impacted severely by wood cutting, and this destruction is ongoing. Tundavala is also a known locality for **Swierstra's Francolin** (Dean 2000); one unidentified francolin was heard calling in the grasslands but despite extensive searching it could not be flushed.

The future?

We have only scratched the surface of this vast region. Much exploring remains to be done, especially north and east of Luanda, where the stunning **Braun's Bush-shrike** and **White-headed Robin Chat** *Cossypha heinrichi* await rediscovery. Our limited observations to date suggest that most of the endemic birds remain locally common, but the extent of the remaining habitat is unknown. Certainly much forest habitat has been lost. In the mid-1900s, large areas of forest were partially or wholly cleared for coffee plantations (Dean 2001). During the civil war, these plantations were allowed to run wild and have been recolonised by forest birds. Now they are being encroached by subsistence agriculture, and there is talk of a return to commercial coffee growing, despite the current glut on the world market. There is an urgent need to assess the extent of remaining habitat, and the distribution of species of conservation concern within these patches. Birders visiting the region should attempt to explore new areas, and keep accurate records of the birds they encounter. These will be important for conservation efforts currently being initiated, as well as contributing to our understanding of the distribution, abundance and natural history of the key species. Birders should also attempt to provide some support to local communities, to demonstrate that ecotourism may be a viable supplement to agriculture.

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Reviews

Oiseaux de Madagascar, Mayotte, Comoros, Seychelles, Réunion, Mauritius

P. Huguet and C. Chappuis. 2003. Four CDs (327 species) with bilingual companion booklet of 114 pages. Paris: Société d'Études Ornithologiques de France.

This is the first major sound collection dealing with the Malagasy region. Madagascar has seen an upsurge of scientific and conservation activities since the political situation improved in the 1980s, and this has materialised in the production, *inter alia*, of two attractive and easy-to-use field and photographic guides of the birds (Sinclair & Langrand 1998, Morris & Hawkins 1998). Long gone are the days when access was restricted and, even in a popular reserve such as Périnet, one had to put up with policemen in civilian clothes following birders into the forest and listening to their conversations over dinner—a strange situation we experienced on our first visit in 1976. Now research and ecotourism are booming, understandably, in a region with such a fascinating flora and fauna.

The region boasts a very high level of endemism: on Madagascar alone, some 109 species are endemic, out of a total of 209 breeding species (Fishpool & Evans 2001). Despite this, and the ease of access in the last 20 years, documentation of bird vocalisations has been neglected. There are a couple of sound guides for the smaller islands, especially Herremans (2001) for the Comores and Rocamora & Solé (2001) for the Seychelles. But for Madagascar in particular no more than atmospheric 'soundscapes' had been available so far (e.g. Randrianary *et al.* 1997), with few species readily recognisable; an early publication by Roché (1971) included only 22 species. With a very large proportion of the local and migratory species now presented (327 species, thus 95% of the whole avifauna), this is a most welcome and much-awaited collection. The presentation of species is the same as in the previous two volumes of the series dealing with continental North and West-Central Africa (Chappuis 2000); the quality is good overall; the space devoted to each species varies from usually less than a minute, to exceptionally over three minutes (as in the case of the versatile Crested Drongo *Dicrurus forficatus*). A short accompanying text gives details of locality, month, and (a novelty) hints at the 'acoustic efficiency' on a scale of 0.1–1.0, i.e. tells us how useful the voice can be in species identification. For a few groups (e.g. the genus *Coua*, and the ground rollers Brachypteraciidae) keys to identification are given in an introductory section. The text could have been better proof-read as misspellings are frequent: *Euritriorchis* (for *Eutriorchis*), *Corythornis vintsoide* (for *vintsioides*), *Zosterops kiriki* throughout (for *kirki*), *Oriola* (for *Oriolia*), etc.

The tapes of couas contain some very interesting, and probably novel, material. The song of Green-capped Coua *Coua* (*ruficeps*) *olivaceiceps* is a striking, rapid, *wu-kip-kip-kip-kip-kip-kip-kip*... (a dozen notes in *c.*2 seconds) followed by a low, muffled *grou-grou-grou-grou-grou-grou*. The high pitch and fast rhythm of the rising *kip-kip* series are unlike anything produced by other couas (as stressed by Morris & Hawkins 1998: 194). But the song of nominate Red-capped Coua *C. r. ruficeps* was practically unknown: F. Hawkins (pers. comm.), who spent two years in the western forests where this form is common, never consciously heard it; I never did either, in the two weeks I spent at Ampijoroa and Kirindy. P. Huguet recorded a song attributed to *C. ruficeps* (at Ampijoroa) consisting of a single, modulated, low-pitched *wo-oue* followed by a couple of low *gro* notes. This could not be more different from the song of *C. olivaceiceps* and lends support to the splitting of these forms as species. Surprisingly, Sinclair & Langrand (1998: 108) write that the two forms have a similar voice, but their description of the song does not correspond to either of these recordings (nor to the description of Morris & Hawkins concerning *C. r. olivaceiceps*), so their statement is probably incorrect. Most couas also produce various low-pitched mewing growls, and they can be equally distinctive. Even though the text refers to the low call of Giant Coua *C. gigas* (in respect of that of Coquerel's Coua *C. coquereli*), it is not presented here, presumably through an oversight. In areas where *C. gigas* is common, this highly characteristic mewing growl is heard several times daily. It is almost impossible to transcribe it (Morris & Hawkins give it as *weeerr-ouull*), but it is unforgettable once heard and has high territorial importance. On one hot day at Kirindy Forest Station, I was playing tapes to a friend over lunch, which included this incredible growl: despite the time of day the local *C. gigas* immediately responded just behind us and nearly walked into the open restaurant, growling away.

Occasionally, the motif presented here is not the most characteristic of the species: the song of the Brown Mesite *Mesitornis unicolor* consists usually of a long series of alternating modulated whistles *chuu-wee, chuu-wee, chuu-wee*... (*chooil-woop, whooil-woop* in Morris & Hawkins 1998). The bird recorded here is undoubtedly this species, but produces only a half-heart-

ed series of single notes, consisting just of the *chuu* component (descending in pitch), a tired bird apparently. The identification key to the ground rollers is misleading in respect of Short-legged Ground Roller *Brachypteracias leptosomus*: this bird gives long series of hollow *hoop* notes at intervals of *c.*1 per second (pers. obs., see also Morris & Hawkins 1998: 218), and not (usually) short series 'with three or four notes' at intervals of one in 2–3 seconds. When camping at Masoala and Mantadia, I heard this species call at dawn every day for long periods of 20–30 minutes, always at the rate of one note/second. The notes of that recorded here sound the right pitch, but are unusually spaced out, and the bird rests briefly between bouts of 3–4 notes: was this perhaps recorded in the afternoon? It sounds curiously unmotivated. The tape of Madagascar Red Owl *Tyto soumagnei* comes from Mantadia: the bird was not seen but assumed to be this species (and not Barn Owl *T. alba*) from the forest habitat. But we saw *T. alba* on the edge of forest at Mantadia, and it would be wrong to assume that these two owls are completely separated in their habitat requirements. After comparing the tape to one of authenticated *T. soumagnei* (by F. Hawkins), I think the recording by P. Huguet is probably of the same species, as the screech sounds rather more muffled than in *T. alba*. But this may also be influenced by the conditions of the recording, so some doubt must remain.

Indeed, the one quibble I have with this collection is that the two main authors (aided by a limited number of collaborators) do not seem to have quite the level of familiarity with the local avifauna that C. Chappuis evidently had with African species. The number of species included is impressive, but several misidentifications have crept in, and the repertoire of some of the commoner species could have been illustrated better. The warblers in particular have posed problems. The authors rightly stress the difficulty of separating Stripe-throated Jery *Neomixis striatigula* from Rand's Warbler *Randia pseudozosterops* as the general style of song and timbre are similar; but what they claim as *R.. pseudozosterops* is none other than *N. striatigula* again, and the real *R. pseudozosterops* appears as Green Jery *Neomixis viridis*! The differences between the first two are well explained by Morris & Hawkins (1998: 272, 280): the song of *N. striatigula* is more complex, a long series of trilled buzzy notes that rise and then descend the scale. That of *R. pseudozosterops* is significantly shorter and purer, with one main phrase of pure whistles, slightly descending; the lack of blurred notes and the lack of an ascending component should eliminate confusion. The song of *N. viridis*, on the other hand, should never have been confused with that of *R. pseudozosterops*, as it consists of very high-pitched, 'seeping' notes, ending in some clicking notes (Morris & Hawkins 1998: 276 and pers. obs.).

Another error concerns the genus *Newtonia*: the recording of Red-tailed Newtonia *N. fanovanae* is not of that species but of Common Newtonia *N. brunneicauda*. It is possible the recordists were influenced by the illustration of *N. fanovanae* in Sinclair & Langrand (1998: 141), which merely shows a *N. brunneicauda* with a rufous tail stuck on—the artist evidently never saw a specimen of the real *N. fanovanae* to draw from. Compare this to the plate drawn by M. Andrews in Morris & Hawkins (1998: 277) and everyone can realise that we are dealing with a completely different bird. *N. fanovanae* is even more distinctive than the latter drawing suggests, as it is rather elegant, with a conspicuously long, thin bill; it feeds in the mid-storey, flitting through the foliage with its red tail slightly open in the manner of an *Erythrocercus* flycatcher. M. Andrews' drawing is in fact a little too schematic; the silver-grey cap blends into the pale grey cheeks and does not contrast so vividly with the white throat as shown (all based on pers. obs. in Andohahela Forest, November 1999). Tapes of the real *N. fanovanae* are in existence and circulate widely among bird tour leaders, thus such an error could have been avoided. F. Hawkins kindly lent us his tape-recording while we were working in Madagascar, and we made further (identical) recordings at Andohahela. The voice is sweet and very distinctive, consisting of two types of repeated whistles: either a series of identical *fui-fui-fui-fui-fui-fui...* at the rate of *c.*5/second (*sweep-sweep-sweep-* in Morris & Hawkins); or a series of double whistles *fitiu-fitiu-fitiu-fitiu-fitiu...* at the rate of 3 double notes/second (*pitchi-pitchi-pitchi...* in Morris & Hawkins). *N. fanovanae* is restricted to a few localities of true lowland forest, usually below 500 m. Although Morris & Hawkins mention it to be 'probably present in the Périnet...area' there are no confirmed records. The locality on the CD attributed to this species, Anjozorobe, is at 900–1,450 m, and from this fact alone, the occurrence of *N. fanovanae* there is remotely unlikely. Even though the voices of the three eastern newtonias are easy for human ears to distinguish, it may be relevant to mention here that the birds do not make such a ready distinction. As we had the opportunity of visiting a little-known section of the low-altitude forest in the east of Masoala National Park, I made special efforts to search for *N. fanovanae* with F. Hawkins' tape. I failed to find it but observed with some surprise that both Dark Newtonia *Newtonia amphichroa* and Common Newtonia *N. brunneicauda* occasionally reacted to the playback of the song of *N. fanovanae*, *N. amphichroa* sometimes very strongly, coming to within 1 m of the source of playback. The same reactions were obtained in Mantadia National Park, where *N. fanovanae* does not occur (as confirmed by F. Hawkins pers comm.). The song of *N. amphichroa* is similar in timbre but is much less stereotyped and more rhythmically varied; the song of *N. brunneicauda* is of a different timbre altogether, rather dry and consisting most often of a repetition of a double note *tchika-tchika-tchika-tchika...* at the rate of 3–4 double notes/second (and reminiscent to my ears of the metallic voice of Grey-backed

Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura*). Thus the songs of *N. fanovanae* and *N. brunneicauda* are close in rhythm but not in timbre, and the reverse is true for the other species-pair. There is little doubt that most (if not all) of the unverified reports of *N. fanovanae* from the Périnet/Mantadia region and elsewhere are misidentifications, some prompted by these surprising reactions on the part of congeneric species: even if the tape played is of the right, much sought-after species, one can actually call up another, and get very confused in the poor light of the understorey (especially if the only field guide available is that of Sinclair & Langrand 1998). On the other hand, *N. amphichroa* and *N. brunneicauda*, which are widely sympatric, do not appear to react to each other's songs. Possibly, *N. brunneicauda* and *N. amphichroa* have not 'learned' to separate the song of their rarer congener as they are also so rarely in contact with it (especially the high-altitude *N. amphichroa*), and some basic structural features common to all are sufficient to elicit a response. In any case, special care must be taken with both sound and visual identification aids as *N. fanovanae* is on the globally threatened list of species, and it is important to get the distribution right.

Of the other families, one should also mention that the recording of another very localised (and endangered) Malagasy endemic, Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis*, should be attributed instead to Red-tailed Vanga *C. madagascariensis*. What is presented (a low-pitched 2-note warble *fu-fui*) is one of the dialectal song variants of the latter, which indeed does occur just north of Toliara (pers. obs., F. Hawkins pers. comm.), whence came this recording. The typical song of *C. rufocarpalis* consists of a two-note whistle *fu-feeeeeeee* (or *fu-fiiiiiiiiîe* in French onomatopoeia), the second note very much louder and longer than the first, so that at a distance one may hear just the second component. This long whistle is somewhat reminiscent of that of Hook-billed Vanga *Vanga curvirostris*. I also have doubts about two of the *Berniera* (ex-*Phyllastrephus*) species: although I have never come across Dusky Tetraka *B. tenebrosa*, the calls presented do not sound like the tape F. Hawkins played to me, but more like those of Spectacled Tetraka *B. zosterops* (with which it can easily be confused, especially as the illustration of *B. tenebrosa* in Sinclair & Langrand is too pale, cf. Morris & Hawkins). And the nasal, *tchac, tchac* or *tchep, tchep* calls given under *B. zosterops* sound far too low-pitched for this species: they correspond instead to the typical calls of Long-billed Tetraka *B. madagascariensis*.

Finally, the Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity *Neodrepanis hypoxantha* sounds more like Common Sunbird-Asity *N. coruscans*, and the occurrence of the former has not yet been confirmed in the Mantadia/Andasibé region (the locality given here). The typical calls of the former are very high-pitched, detached, clipped metallic notes, and are not presented here (see also the sonograms published in Hawkins *et al.* 1997). The two species have been much confused: even the photographs taken in 1973 and 1976 on a hill *c.*100 m higher than Périnet-Analamazaotra (at Maromizaha, in fact) and mentioned by A. D. Forbes-Watson (in Collar & Stuart 1985: 363) as belonging to *N. hypoxantha* have been re-identified as *N. coruscans* (F. Hawkins pers. comm.). When R. J. Dowsett and I visited Maromizaha, we noticed that the local guides readily claim that *N. hypoxantha* occurs there when all we could see when we had good views was *N. coruscans*. Even though the locality of Maromizaha is mentioned by Morris & Hawkins (1998) as a possible spot for *N. hypoxantha*, this was in fact based on unverified rumours (F. Hawkins pers. comm.) and the species was not included in the local Important Bird Area biome list (IBA MG054 in Fishpool & Evans 2001).

Sometimes the sex of the singing bird mentioned in the text seems wrong: as far as we know, it is the female (not the male) that sings in the Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*. As for Crossley's Babbler *Mystacornis crossleyi*, whose songs include two types of long whistle (either rising or nearly monotonous), the rising whistles are attributed here to females and the longer, monotonous ones to males. But I have seen males produce both types, and as Morris & Hawkins mention that the female plumage may be found in sexually mature males, no doubt all songs are given by males.

There is apparently a recording of the western race (or morph) of Tylas Vanga *Tylas eduardi albigularis* from Andasibé: if this is correct, that would be the first record of the western form in that eastern area (F. Hawkins pers. comm.); the voice does not appear to differ much from that of typical *T. eduardi*. The western race is only at all regular in some of the western forests, especially Andranomena (pers. obs., Hawkins 1995, Morris & Hawkins 1998); but as occasionally birds of both forms occur together, *albigularis* may be more a morph than a race.

Inevitably, a large proportion of the rarer migrants or vagrants have been tape-recorded outside the region. This sort of geographical shortcut may be a problem when dealing with local taxonomic forms. Thus the song and call of Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* come from the nominate race in Europe, not from the endemic Malagasy race *I. m. podiceps*. The voice of Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* was taken from birds introduced in France: although this is not specified, these birds almost certainly did not come from the endemic Malagasy race *bernieri*, sometimes considered a separate species. Similarly, recordings of Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* also come from France (thus dealing with different subspecies). As Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* is no more than a vagrant to parts of the region, presenting the display song of a breed-

ing pair in France may seem superfluous. And was it necessary to include Java Sparrow *Padda oryzivora*, as this introduced finch became extinct in the region long ago? Although Sinclair & Langrand (1998) mention it has survived on Mauritius, it was in fact last seen there in 1892 (Diamond 1987). At least some of the space taken up by vagrants might have been more usefully devoted to improved coverage of the numerous endemic species.

Despite the few misgivings explained above (and worth spending a little time on, as they often concern threatened species), I strongly recommend this collection to anyone interested in the avifauna of the region. A second edition might, in time, include corrections and a few additions—such as Madagascar Serpent Eagle *Eutriorchis astur*, Slender-billed Flufftail *Sarothrura watersi*, the distinct song type of *Neomixis striatigula pallidior* (a very common bird in the dry south-west) and Bernier's Vanga *Oriolia bernieri*. Tapes of these exist already and should be made available in future collections. Apparently other CDs of Malagasy birds are in preparation, but for the moment this series is unsurpassed and deserves a wide distribution.

I am grateful to F. Hawkins and R. Safford for comments on a draft of this review.

Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire

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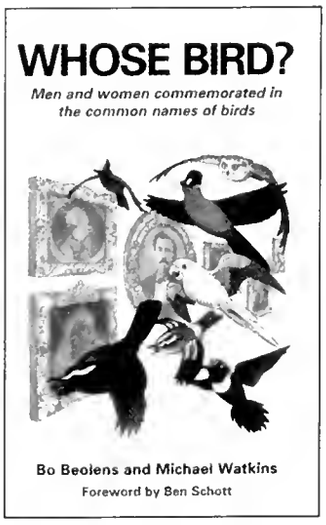
Whose Bird? Men and Women Commemorated in the Common Names of Birds

Bo Beolens and Mike Watkins, 2003. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 400 pp, 152 black and white illustrations. Softback. ISBN 0-7136-6647-1. UK£17.99.

Bo Beolens and Mike Watkins have produced an entertaining book, one to dip into rather than read cover to cover. It is full of fascinating facts and useless information. For example, did you know that of the people who have given their names to birds at least 63 were medical doctors, but only two were professional poets? Anyone who has ever wondered who Vieillot or Verreaux, Heuglin or Hartlaub were can find the answer



here—or at least as much of it as could be tracked down.

The publishers claim on the jacket that the book presents 'a potted biography of every individual who has ever given their name to a species of bird...Each biography describes the life and work of the person concerned.' The authors, wisely, avoid such hyperbole. Though they have clearly put considerable efforts into their research, they admit that in some cases only the sketchiest of information could be traced, and in eight cases none at all. But as they reckon there are 2,246 bird species named after a total of 1,124 individuals, eight blanks is not bad.

The opening chapter describes the complex detective work that was necessary, firstly to accumulate the information and then to make some sort of sense of it. This is followed by a tongue-in-cheek chapter on 'How to get a bird named after you'—it helps to have discovered a new species, but it is considered very poor form if you then just name the bird after yourself (a convention which did not deter the Scottish-born American, Alexander Wilson, from not only naming Wilson's Warbler after himself but also incorporating his own name in its generic name: *Wilsonia pusilla*)—so you need to find a tame fellow-ornithologist to write the description for you. An easier route to immortality is to be the wife or mistress of an ornithologist, or simply to be rich and sponsor expeditions.

As for the biographies, with 1,124 of them crammed into 360 pages, they are mostly, perforce, very succinct. Some are no more than a single short sentence; a few stretch to just over a page. The authors have, nonetheless, managed to find space for anecdotes and incidental information that bring to life their varied cast of adventurers, eccentrics, earnest scientists, hard-nosed businessmen, rogues and demi-gods. Sometimes this information is contained within the biographies (for example, there are the Verreaux brothers, professional taxidermists who 'gained notoriety for having once attended the funeral of a tribal chief, whose body they then disinterred, took to Cape Town and stuffed!'). Or else it is crammed into a succession of boxes scattered through the text, that summarise such facts as the nationalities and professions of bird collectors, or the unusual ways in which some of them met their deaths (the calling carries a much higher than average risk of being killed by elephants).

Bo Beolens founded and Mike Watkins is a member of the Disabled Birders Association, and the book was conceived as a way of raising money for that organisation. It might have been worth buying for that reason alone, but it needs no such special pleading. It stands on its own merits as a useful work of reference that is also a lively read.

Bill Quantrill

Zwazo Sesel: The Names of Seychelles Birds and Their Meanings

Adrian Skerrett, Pat Matyot and Gerard Rocamora, illustrated by Judith Skerrett, 2003. Victoria, Seychelles: Island Conservation Society. 94pp. Softback, UK£10, available from Adrian Skerrett, Hazeley Brook, Keele Road, Keele, Staffordshire ST5 5AL, UK.

Published by the recently formed Island Conservation Society, *Zwazo Sesel* presents and explains the Creole (the local French-based language) name for every bird species recorded in the Seychelles archipelago. Whereas the majority of breeding species, as well as the more familiar migrants, have well-established Creole names, developed over 200 years of human settlement on the islands, around 75% of the 259 bird species recorded from the Seychelles have no local name. The authors of this publication have rectified this by constructing an appropriate Creole nomenclature for these species. A number of approaches have been taken. Where a species has been given a Creole name from elsewhere in the Indian Ocean this has been adopted. For some species, for example Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, the Creole name (greb likou nwanr) is an adaptation of the established French name (Grèbe à cou noir). Finally, some species have a specially constructed Creole name. Eurasian Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* is thus *Sonmey lerop—Somney* from the Creole to sleep (representing the fact that this species roosts during the day) and *lerop* meaning from Europe.

For each species, the Creole, English, French and scientific name is given along with a short piece of text explaining the status of each species in Seychelles and an explanation of the origin of the name. Black-and-white illustrations are scattered liberally throughout.

This is a very well-researched book and although its real value will lie in encouraging a greater local interest in birds, through enabling Seychellois to put a local name to the species they see, *Swazo Sesel* will appeal to anyone with a interest in the avifauna of this magical group of islands.

Rob Lucking

A Birdwatcher's Guide to Morocco

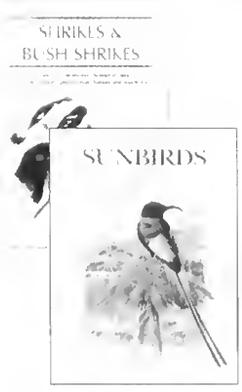
Patrick and Fedora Bergier, 2004. Perry: Prion Ltd. 172 pp, 54 maps. Softback. UK£14.75.

This revised guide to birding sites in Morocco comes 15 years after the first edition and is an enormous improvement. It is three times as thick, covers over 50 sites, rather than the original 15, and includes far more information on places to stay, the birds themselves and local contacts etc. Such statistics speak for themselves, and by giving phone numbers for recommended hotels this book could even be used to plan an entire birding visit from the outset. The omission of a summary map showing the localities over the whole country would have been a welcome addition to this end, and does make it somewhat less user-friendly than it could be.

I must state that the previous edition was already outdated and largely obsolete compared to the regularly revised Gosney guides, which have in my view been superior for at least ten years. This revision includes several sites in Western Sahara, which is an interesting new addition, and one that is sure to be elaborated in future guides. The maps are very clear, but at the expense of not always providing the level of detail that would be helpful (Gosney's are generally better in this respect). In most other aspects, however, this re-establishes the Bergiers' guide as the superior publication to take with you, certainly better than others I've seen that have appeared in recent years.

The target audience is very clearly northern Europeans, and it is a continuing frustration that Moroccan agencies are not more closely involved with such publications, as it proves that the wildlife tourism potential of Morocco still goes largely unrecognised within the country. Having said this, it probably makes such a book all the more important, as it would certainly not appear unless dedicated people like the Bergier husband and wife team took the initiative.

Overall, I would remark that for a prospective birder visiting Morocco, especially for the first time, this guide represents good value for money, and is now the one to acquire.

Chris Bowden

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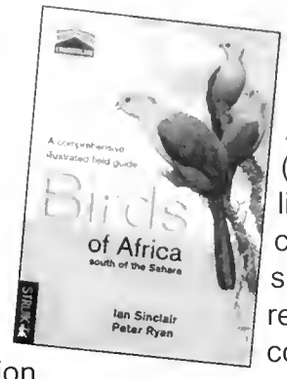

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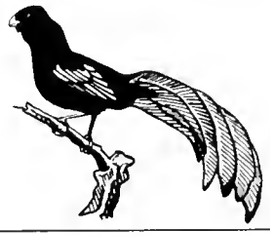

These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from 2003 and early 2004, with a few from earlier dates.** We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to R.J. Dowsett's (1993) Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists (in: R.J. Dowsett and F. Dowsett-Lemaire. *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds.* Tauraco Res. Rep. 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

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Les observations ci-après sont en majeure partie non confirmées et sont publiées uniquement dans le but d'informer. **La plupart des données sont de 2003 et début 2004; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes.** Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs données et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment R.J. Dowsett (1993) Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists (in: R.J. Dowsett and F. Dowsett-Lemaire. *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds.* Tauraco Res. Rep. 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

Azores

Records from October 2003–April 2004 include the following. The **Bermuda Petrel** *Pterodroma cahow* that was ringed on an offshore islet on 17 November 2002 had returned to the same burrow a year later. Two **Great Northern Divers** *Gavia immer* were at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 14–17 February. Single **Double-crested Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax auritus* were found on Corvo on 9–28 October, on Faial on 11 November, and on Flores on 12–18 November. Sixteen **Cattle Egrets** *Bubulcus ibis* were counted at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 14–18 February and 13 on Faial on 10 April. A **Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula* stayed at Porto Pim, Horta, from 13 November until 7 April at least. Two **Little Egrets** *E. garzetta* were on Vila Islet on 19–22 April. Up to 12 juvenile **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were on Corvo on 8–27 October; some moved to Flores, where five were found dead on 20 October; four flew past the cliffs of Santa Maria on 21 April.

Two **Lesser Canada Geese** *Branta (canadensis) hutchinsii* and three **Wood Ducks** *Aix sponsa* were present at Terra Nostra, São Miguel, on 22 November. **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* were recorded at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, on 31 October (one) and 13 February (one), at Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, on 31 October–1 November (two) and 22 November (three), on Flores on 16 November (one), and at Cedre Cidade, São Miguel, on 23–24 November (two). **Green-winged Teals** *A. (crecca) carolinensis* were noted at Cedre Cidade, São Miguel, in November (up to eight males amongst a flock of juvenile/female teals, possible mostly Green-winged); on Flores on 16 November (one), and at Lagoa do Fogo, São Miguel, on 14 February (at least three). A **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* was at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 28 October, with two at Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, on 31 October. Up to eight **American Black Ducks** *A. rubripes* were at Lagoa Branca, Flores, around 10 October. **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* were noted at Lagoa da Lomba, Flores, on 28 October (one), at Velas, São Jorge, on 29 October (two), at Cedre Cidade, São Miguel, on 11–23 November (up to five), and at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, on 13 February (four). Five **Lesser Scaup** *A. affinis* were at Cedre Cidade, São Miguel, on 3 November, with another on Caldeira Branco, Flores, on 13 November. A **Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis* was found at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 14–15 February, and a first-winter male **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* at Lajas das Flores harbour on 14 November. An **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* was seen at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 15–18 February. An **American Coot** *Fulica americana* stayed at Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, from 31 October to at least 14 February and two were present at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 20–21 November.

Three **Eurasian Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* were in Faial Caldeira, on about 10 October. Nearctic waders on Terceira included up to three **Semipalmated Plovers** *C. semipalmatus* on 18–21 November, with two still present on 18 February, a **Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri* in late October, up to

six **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* on 18–21 November, with one still present on 30 December, and two **Baird's Sandpipers** *C. bairdii* in late October, with one present until 6 November at least. Single **Purple Sandpipers** *C. maritima* were present at Ponta Degada, São Miguel, on 13 February, at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 15th, and on Cabo da Praia breakwater on 17th. A **Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus* remained at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, from 3 September to at least 18 February. Single **Hudsonian Godwits** *Limosa haemastica* were found on Terceira on 6 September and 15–17 February. Two single **Hudsonian Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* were seen at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 18 November; one was still present on 18 February. Eight **Whimbrels** *N. phaeopus* were at Porto Pim, Horta, on 14 April. Two single **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* were seen on Terceira on 20–21 November. Single **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius* were found at Lajes, Pico, on 10 November, at Santa Cruz, Flores, on 13 November, at Porto Pim, Horta, on 25 November, and at Madaleina, Pico, on 8 December.

A first-winter **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 14–18 February, was the third for the Azores and had been ringed in Calais, Pas-de-Calais, France, in August 2003. **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* were observed on Terceira in November–December (three) and 14–18 February (33), on Flores on 18 November (three), in Horta harbour on 9 December (one) and 10 January (one), and in Ponta Delgada harbour on 12–14 February (three). **American Herring Gulls** *L. argentatus smithsonianus* were reported from São Miguel on 11–13 February (up to three), Terceira on 14–18 February (up to eight) and Horta harbour on 6 April (one). A first-summer **Great Black-backed Gull** *L. marinus* was present at Lagoa do Fogo, São Miguel, on 25 April, and a first-winter **Iceland Gull** *L. glaucoides* at Riberinha, Terceira, on 18 February (per *Dutch Birding* 25: 400–406; 26: 56–61, 128–138; per *Birding World* 16: 460–461; 17: 10, 56–57, 199).

Botswana

The following records were made in November 2003–March 2004. A female **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae* was seen near the old gate linking Chobe National Park to Kasane, in mid-January. Other interesting species in mid-January included **Corncrake** *Crex crex* and **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* along the Chobe River (*GR*). An adult female and a juvenile **Olive Woodpecker** *Dendropicos griseocephalus* at Mowana Lodge, Kasane, on 15 November, represent a first record for the country; previous sightings in the area were made across the Chobe River in the Eastern Caprivi, Namibia, and near Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe (*AR & RT*). The first **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* for southern Africa was found at Kaa game viewing area (24°36'S 20°50'E), on the edge of Gemsbok National Park, on 19 March; numerous Red-backed *L. collurio* and Lesser Grey Shrikes *L. minor* were also present (*RK*). **Northern Grey-headed Sparrows** *Passer griseus* were recorded around Mowana Lodge, Kasane, on 14–16 November (*AR & RT*).

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* by Mark Andrews

Cameroon

Records from March–April 2003 include the following. An **Ovambo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis* was seen at Bénoué National Park (=NP) on 8 March; this is an uncommon bird in Cameroon. A juvenile **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*, claimed from Waza NP on 11 April, would constitute the second for Cameroon. The first **Golden Nightjar** *Caprimulgus eximius* for Cameroon, discovered on 25 March north of Mora (*Bull ABC* 10: 124–125), was still present on 11 April, when it was observed calling at dusk in low flight. A pair of large, all-dark swifts in the Bakossi Mountains, studied at close quarters on 14 April, were thought to be **Fernando Po Swifts** *Apus* (*barbatus*) *sladeniae*. **Desert Cisticolas** *Cisticola aridulus* were identified north of Mora and in Waza NP on 10–11 April; this species was only recently confirmed for Cameroon (*AR, JR, DH, EF*).

In February–April 2004 the following records were noted. Two juvenile **Steppe Eagles** *Aquila nipalensis* were in Waza NP on 4 March; unknown in Cameroon before 1978, this species is now regularly observed in the far north. An **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii* flew over Kilum-Ijim forest on 27 February; this species is not mentioned on the Mt Oku checklist (Fotso, R. 2001, *Malimbus* 23: 1–12) and may be the first record for the area. A **Freckled Nightjar** *Caprimulgus tristigma* heard near Maroua on 1 April appears to represent a range extension. At least 15 **Forest Swallows** *Hirundo fuliginosa* came to roost in old Red-headed Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* nests in Korup NP in March. A good sighting of **Rufous-rumped Lark** *Pinarocorys erythropygia* was obtained in the Bénoué area on 6 March; there are few records for the park or for Cameroon. In March, two pairs of **Cricket Warblers** *Spiloptila clamans* were found again at Mora, where the species was first recorded for the country in December 1995; they were singing and apparently ter-

Figure 1. Black-winged Stilt / Echasse blanche *Himantopus himantopus*, Bird Island, Seychelles (Adrian Skerrett)

Figure 2. Black-tailed Godwit / Barge à queue noire *Limosa limosa*, Alphonse Island, Seychelles, December 2003 (Adrian Skerrett)

Figure 3. European Nightjar / Engoulevent d'Europe *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Denis Island, Seychelles, November 2003 (Gideon Climo)

Figure 4. European Turtle Dove / Tourterelle des bois *Streptopelia turtur*, Bird Island, Seychelles, November 2003 (Adrian Skerrett)

Figure 5. Amur Falcon / Faucon de l'Amour *Falco amurensis*, Alphonse Island, Seychelles (Adrian Skerrett)

ritorial and it seems that the species is well established in the area. A **Red-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia phoenicoptera* was seen in Bénoué NP on 7 March; there do not appear to be any previous published reports from the park although Exclamatory Paradise Whydah *Vidua interjecta*, the species that parasitises it, has been recorded. On 7 March, a pair of **Streaky-headed Seedeaters** *Serinus gularis* was found in Bénoué NP, where there are few records of this species. A male **African Golden-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza flaviventris* was seen north of Mora on 3 March; Louette (*The birds of Cameroon*, 1981) only gives two published records from Cameroon, but recently the species has repeatedly been recorded in the area (*NB*).

Canary Islands

Reports from the period October 2003–May 2004 include the following. A **Madeiran Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma castro* flew past El Cotillo lighthouse, Fuerteventura, on 27 November (per *Birding World* 16: 495). A **Black-throated Diver** *Gavia arctica* was close inshore off El Médano, Tenerife, on 19 January (per *Birding World* 17: 57–58). Two **Squacco Herons** *Ardeola ralloides* were at Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, on 5 March (per *Birding World* 17: 107). On Lanzarote, single **Western Reef Egrets** *Egretta gularis* were seen at El Golfo on 18 January and at Arrecife on 25 January; both were white morphs (*RV*). One was at Charca de Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, on 4–5 May (per *Birding World* 17: 199). The escaped **Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis* was still at Playa de Sotavento, Fuerteventura, in April (*DR*). On Tenerife, two **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* were at Roquito del Fraile, on 13 October (*TK*), and at Presa de Bernardino, from 29 December until 26 February at least (*TC*). A **Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* was on Los Cristianos beach, Tenerife, on 20 January (per *Birding World* 17: 57–58). **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were observed at Amarillo golf course, Tenerife, on 17–24 October (one; *TK*), at El Cotillo beach, Fuerteventura, on 30 November (one; per *Birding World* 16: 495), at La Caleta de Famara, Lanzarote, on 19 January (one; *DR*), and at Playa Barca, Fuerteventura, on 1–6 April (two; *DR*). Three **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus* flew along Tenerife's south coast on 20 February (*GO*).

Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* were found at Los Molinos, Fuerteventura, on 15 December (seven), 16 January (four) (per *Birding World* 16: 495; 17: 57–58), 18 February (five adults and nine ducklings; *TC*); and 1 March (nine adults and eight ducklings; *TC*). Two were also seen at Catalina García, Fuerteventura, on 19 December (per *Birding World* 16: 495), with a pair with ten young there on 2 April (*DR*). Other noteworthy ducks included two male **Northern Pintails** *Anas acuta* at Embalse de Valle Molina, Tenerife, on 17 February (*GO*), a female **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* at Catalina García, Fuerteventura, on 27 November (per *Birding World* 16: 495), a male and female **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* at Embalse de Valle Molina, Tenerife, 17 February (*GO*), and a **Ferruginous Duck** *A. nyroca* at Castillo, Fuerteventura, on 15 October (*AR*). A female **Ring-necked Duck** *A. collaris* was still present at Embalse de Valle Molina, Tenerife, on 24 March (*TC*), and two adult males, photographed at Catalina García, Fuerteventura, on 14 October (*AR*), remained there until 16 February (per *Birding World* 17: 57–58), with one present until 18 February at least (*TC*). A **Lanner Falcon** *Falco cherrug* was observed at Los Cristianos, Tenerife, on 24 February (*TC*).

Three pairs of **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* were at Catalina García, Fuerteventura, on 2 April (*DR*). A **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* at Roquito del Fraile, Tenerife, on 6 November, was with a second individual the next day until 15 November at least (*TC*). Also there was a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* on 13–19 October (*TK*). Single **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* were noted at Los Llanos, La Palma, on 9 October (*TC*) and at Barranco de Tirajana, Gran Canaria, from 2 November until 5 December (per *Birding World* 16: 495). A **Solitary Sandpiper** *T. solitaria* at Embalse de Valle Molina, Tenerife, on 18 March, will be the first for the Canaries, if accepted (*TC*). On Lanzarote, single **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius* were present at Playa Quemada, on 22 January, and at Los Cocoterus salines, near Guatiza, on 23 January (*RV*). Five **Slender-billed Gulls** *Larus genei* were on Playa de Sotavento, Fuerteventura, on 17 February (*TC*). An orange-billed tern on Fuerteventura, on 2 April, was either a **Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* or an **Elegant Tern** *S. elegans* (per *Dutch Birding* 26: 195–207). A **Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* was with a flock of migrant **European Turtle Doves** *S. turtur* at Vege de Río Palmas, Fuerteventura, on 1 March (per *Birding World* 17: 107).

At Amarilla golf course, Tenerife, ten **Lesser Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella rufescens*, amongst which three were singing, were present on 21 February (*GO*). Five **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* were still there on 24 December, with four remaining until 23 February at least (*TC*). At the same site, a male **Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba yarrellii* was found on 13 February (*GO*). **Red-rumped Swallows** *Hirundo daurica* were also observed there, on 12 February (two; *GO*), and at Guargacho, Tenerife, on 13 February (two; *GO*) and Catalina García, Fuerteventura, on 2 April (two; *DR*). A **Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* was at Erjos, Tenerife, on 7 March, and four **Redwings** *T. iliacus* were at El Cotillo, Fuerteventura, on 2 March (per *Birding World* 17: 107). **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* were reported from La Laguna, Tenerife, on 25 January (per *Birding World* 17: 57–58), Golf del Sur, Tenerife, until 24 February at least, and Costa Calma, Fuerteventura, on 17 February (*TC*). On Tenerife, single **Common Chiffchaffs** *P. c. colly-*

bita were singing at Amarilla golf course, on 10 February, and at Santiago del Teide, on 15 February (*GO*). A female **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* was at Ten Bel, Tenerife, on 9 November (*TC*). A **Pied Crow** *Corvus albus* of unknown origin was seen on Gran Canaria on 27 March; one was observed on the same island on 31 December 2002 (per *Birding World* 17: 107). A female **Yellow-mantled Widowbird** *Euplectes macroura* with three young was observed at Amarilla golf course, Tenerife, on 10–23 February (*GO*). The first **Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus* for the archipelago was at Amarilla golf course, Tenerife, on 15–30 November, the fourth **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* at Barranco de La Torre, Fuerteventura, on 16 February, and the second and third **Reed Buntings** *E. schoeniclus* were at Las Galletas, Tenerife, on 13 November, and at Barranco de La Torre, Fuerteventura, on 16–17 February, respectively (*TC*).

Cape Verde Islands

In October 2003, the following sightings were made. A **Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* was seen off Barril, São Nicolau, on 23rd. A **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* off Ponta do Sal, Boavista, on 25th suggests that a population may still exist off this island. Also on Boavista, on the same day, two **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were at Ribeira Grande; this is now a regular site for the species. Single **Squacco Herons** *Ardeola ralloides* near Chão Bom, Santiago, on 19–20th, and at Pedra Badejo Lagoon, Santiago, on 20 October, were apparently the fourth and fifth records for Cape Verde (see Hazevoet, C. J. 2003, Fifth report on birds from the Cape Verde Islands, including records of 15 taxa new to the archipelago, *Arquivos do Museu Bocage* nova série III (19): 503–528). At least three dark-morph **Western Reef Egrets** *Egretta gularis* were seen near Tarrafal, Santiago, on 19–20th; there are only two Cape Verde records before 1980 but more than 25 since. The last remaining colony of **Cape Verde Purple Herons** *Ardea* (*purpurea*) *bournei* at Banana, Ribeira Montanha, Santiago, was very active on 18th, with *c.*25 birds in attendance, including 8+ fully feathered juveniles. A **Common Teal** *Anas crecca* at Pedra de Lume Salinas, Sal, on 24th, represents the first record for this island and the eighth for the archipelago. Three sightings of adult **Egyptian Vultures** *Neophron percnopterus* were made on Boavista on 25 October. A single **Eurasian Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was seen on Raso on 21st; there were no Cape Verde records before 1980, but more than 20 since then. Three or four **Cape Verde Buzzards** *Buteo* (*buteo*) *bannermani* were observed near Pico da Antónia, Santiago, on 19th; this inland population seems stable with up to five reported in 1999–2002. A **Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris* was seen on Boavista on 25th. Two **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* near Tarrafal, Santiago, on 19–20th, and a **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* also there on 19th, both constitute second records for Santiago and for the Cape Verdes. Single **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes* recorded near Tarrafal, Santiago, on 19th, at Pedro da Lume Salinas, Sal, and near Santa Maria, Sal, on 24th were the fifth to seventh for Cape Verde. Two **Great Skuas** *Stercorarius skua* were on the sea between Branco and São Nicolau on 22nd, and possibly the same two were seen off Barril, São Nicolau, the next day; these represent the tenth and 11th records for Cape Verde. A **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* at São Nicolau airport on 24th, and a **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* on Raso on 21st were both second records for the respective islands. At least four **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* were singing along Ribeira Norte, Boavista, on 25th; this species was first reported to breed on the island in 1996 (*AR, EK, GE*).

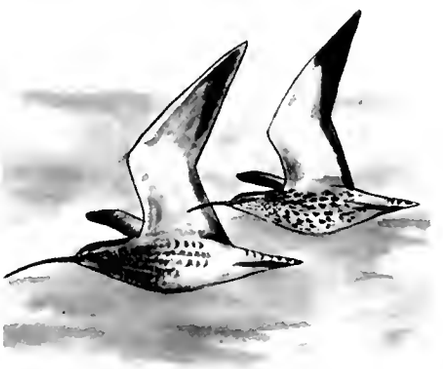
Records from December 2003–March 2004 include the following. At least 800 **Cattle Egrets** *Bubulcus ibis* were counted at Mindelo sewage ponds roost, São Vicente, on 30 March. A **Western Reef Heron** was on Boa Vista on 22 March. At Liberão, Santiago, ten begging young **Cape Verde Purple Herons** were counted on 27 February and one nest with begging young and several juveniles were still present on 10 March. On Santiago, up to three **Cape Verde Buzzards** were regularly calling above São Jorge dos Órgãos in late February–early March and a pair was seen copulating at Serra de Malagueta on 25 February. At Mindelo sewage ponds, São Vicente, a **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* stayed from December until 7 March at least, and an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was seen on 7 March; a claim of a **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* on 30 March needs to be substantiated. At Pedra de Lume, Sal, four **Lesser Yellowlegs** were seen in late December 2003, with two still there on 3 March and one on 7 April. A **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* was also there on 24 March (per *Dutch Birding* 26: 128–138 and *Birding World* 17: 151).

Egypt

The following records were made in October 2003–April 2004. Along the Red Sea coast, an alleged **frigatebird** *Fregata* sp. flew over Dahab on 23 April. Three **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* were at Dashour Lake, near Cairo, on 6 December. An adult **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* was seen south of Shalateen in mid-December. **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotus* were observed in Wadi Gamel on 28 October (two) and at Gebel Elba in mid-December (20). Also in Wadi Gamel on 28 October were a **Verreaux's Eagle** *A. verreauxii* (one of the most northerly records in Egypt) and a pair of **Bonelli's Eagles** *Hieraaetus fasciatus*. A **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* was noted at Dashour Lake, near Cairo, on 6 December. Single **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* were near Shalateen and at Wadi Adieb on 15 December. At Hamata man-

groves, on 20 March, a small curlew in a flock of flying Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata* was possibly a **Slender-billed Curlew** *N. tenuirostris*; it had a clean white underwing and large rounded flank spots, and the call was described as *co-lii co-lii*, resembling Eurasian Curlew but weaker and higher pitched. A **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* was in the garden of the Shams Alam Hotel on 26 October. Three **Hume's Tawny Owls** *Strix butleri* were heard at Gebel Elba in mid-December. Six **Pied Kingfishers** *Ceryle rudis* were at Lahami Bay, 20 km north of Berenice, on 1 January.

A **Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis* was singing in the Gebel Elba area in mid-December. On the Red Sea coast, an **Ethiopian Swallow** *Hirundo aethiopica* was claimed from Shams Alam on 19 March (reportedly seen briefly but well in flight). In the same area, on 26 October, a **Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola* (*torquatus*) *maurus* was at the Bedouin Village Lodge. Two **Caucasian Stonechats** *S. t. variegatus* and one **Armenian Stonechat** *S. t. armenicus* were reported from Nabq, nearby Hamata, on 14–16 March. Unusual wintering warblers at Gebel Elba in mid-December included two **Orphean** *Sylvia hortensis*, 20 **Cyprus** *S. melanothorax* and three **Desert Warblers** *S. n. nana*. **Desert Warblers** were also recorded at Wadi Gamel (one on 10 December) and at Lahami Bay, 20 km north of Berenice (daily from 29 December to 5 January, with a maximum of six on 31 December). A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* was at Wadi El Gemal Marsh on 26 October, with another there on 28 October. An **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* was at the checkpoint south of Marsa Alam on 26 October, with another at Qalun village on 11 December; three were wintering at Gebel Elba. **House Crows** *Corvus splendens* were seen at Ain Sukhna on 14 November (six) and at Hurghada on 15 November (three); one at Qalun village on 11 December had reportedly been in the area for a year. A juvenile **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* was observed at Lake Qarun on 1 November. Approximately ten **Red Avadavats** *Amandava amandava*, including a nest-building pair, were at Lake Qarun, 3.8 km east of Shakshuk village, in early November (*MBD*, *SBD*, *DR*, *SR*; per *Sandgrouse* 26: 76, *Dutch Birding* 26: 58–68, 195–207 and *Birding World* 16: 495 & 17: 109).



Slender-billed Curlew
Numenius tenuirostris
by Mark Andrews

Ethiopia

In November 2003, a **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* was seen at Filowa, Awash National Park, on 15th, and at least two **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinereus* were on the north-east shore of Lake Shalla on 27th (*LD*).

Gabon

Verreaux's Batis *Batis minima* was tape-recorded in the Gamba area, in the south-west, in March 2002. What was thought to be this species was also tape-recorded in Moukalaba-Doudou National Park, on the north-east shore of Ndogo Lagoon, in April 2003; these are new sites for this scarce species (*GA*).

The Gambia

A wing found at N'jau, Central River Division, on 31 January 2002, is now thought to be from a **White-bellied Bustard** *Eupodotis senegalensis*; this is the first indication of the occurrence of this species in The Gambia since the late 1980s (*CRB*). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* with a metallic ring on the right leg and a blue ring on the left, seen at Tanji Bird Reserve, Western Division, on 23 January 2002, appears to have been ringed on 17 July 1999 as a juvenile in Iceland, 5,653 km away (*CRB*). A **Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* was observed at Sabi, Upper River Division, on 25 May 2002; the few previous records are from the coast (*KR*).

Records from August 2003–June 2004 include the following. Two **White-crested Tiger Herons** *Tigriornis leucolopha* were seen in Bao Bolon Wetland Reserve, North Bank Division, on 25 February (*AGe*). Three **Abdim's Storks** *Ciconia abdimii* were at Sabi, east of Basse, Upper River Division, on 1–3 June, with one reappearing briefly on 10th. Two **White Storks** *C. ciconia* were soaring over Sabi on 26 August, at the height of the wet season; all previous records from The Gambia are from the dry season. **European Griffon Vultures** *Gyps fulvus* were continually present in the area around Basse in the period January–June, with maxima of 12 over Sabi on 6 February, and more than 35 dominating a group of 150+ large vultures around a fresh horse carcass near the same village on 30 April. An **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii* was seen south of Basse, on 12 February; this is the second recent sighting of the species in the area, following that of one on 23 August (*KR*). A **Lesser Moorhen** *Gallinula angulata* was photographed near Bakalari, 20 km east of Banjul, North Bank Division, on 27 February; this is an unusual locality and date (*AGe*). Three sightings of **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media*, possibly all of the same bird, were had at Prufu Swamp, Upper River Division, on 17 January; this species is rare in The Gambia (*KR*). An **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* was seen following the Banjul ferry on 24 January (*NB*).

The **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* remains found under an active Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera* nest east of Basse, Upper River

Division, on 4 March, constitute the fourth record for The Gambia of the species; the previous three were from Western Division (*CRB & KR*). A **Black-backed Cisticola** *Cisticola eximius* in non-breeding plumage was studied at length at Tanji Bird Reserve, Western Division, on 21 January; this species is rarely recorded in The Gambia and this may be the first for Tanji (*NB*). An **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* was photographed at Bansang Quarry, Central River Division, on 5 December (*JH*).

Ghana

Noteworthy records in February–March 2003 include the following. A **Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* was at Tono Dam on 3 March. In Mole National Park (=NP), a **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* and an adult **Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* with two juveniles were seen on 27 February. A melanistic **Ovambo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis*, also there on 16 March, is one of very few records from Ghana. Single **Red-necked Falcons** *Falco chicquera* were seen at Tono Dam on 2 March and in Mole NP on 16 March. At Tono Dam, rare inland records were obtained of **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* (one in breeding plumage on 17 March) and **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* (one on 2–17 March). Four **African Mourning Doves** *Streptopelia decipiens* were seen in riparian woodland near Tono Dam on 3 March; there are few records of this species in Ghana. **Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* was heard and seen at Aboabo, Kakum NP, on 12 March, at the same location as in May 2002. **Brown Nightjar** *Caprimulgus binotatus* was not uncommon at several sites in Kakum NP, being vocal and tape-responsive in February–March; it was also heard at Bobiri Nature Reserve on 25 February. A **Black-shouldered Nightjar** *C. nigriscapularis* was seen at Brimsu Reservoir, near Cape Coast, on 9 March. Flocks of **Bates's Swifts** *Apus batesi* were seen over several locations in Kakum NP in February–March.

A **Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* was seen well at Tono Dam on 18 March. **Puvel's Illadopsis** *Illadopsis puveli* was recorded on 26 February at Baobeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary, a considerable distance from the other known site at Abokobi. **Speckle-fronted Weavers** *Sporopipes frontalis* were not uncommon in the vicinity of Tono Dam in February–March; the species now seems to be resident in the far north (*AR*).

Guinea

Records from Dalaba, in the Fouta Djalon, on 10–13 February 2004, represent a new locality for **Brown-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra australis*, **Heuglin's Masked Weaver** *Ploceus heuglini* (common), **Dybowski's Twinspot** *Euschistospiza dybowskii* and **Cabanis Bunting** *Emberiza cabanisi* (*MCr*).

Kenya

The following records are from the period October 2003–April 2004 (or from 2003 if no date is given). A **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus pacificus* was seen in the Pemba Channel on 17 December. A juvenile **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* was at Ziwa, near Eldoret; this species has suffered a significant decline over the past 15 years and has mostly been reported recently on Lake Naivasha although no breeding has been recorded. It appears to survive in isolated highland ponds and small wetlands. A juvenile **Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda* was found exhausted on Watamu beach on 14 November and died the following morning; amazingly its primaries were only two-thirds grown, suggesting it had left the nest only 1–2 weeks previously—the nearest breeding colony is on Aldabra *c.*1,500 km away. Two **White-tailed Tropicbirds** *P. lepturus* were in the Pemba Channel on 12 February, with a **Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra* there on 29 December. A **Brown Booby** *S. leucogaster* and a juvenile **Red-footed Booby** *S. sula* were off Funzi Island, north of Shimoni, on 24 October; an adult of the latter species was washed up in poor condition on Watamu beach on 7 December and died. Two **Western Reef Egrets** *Egretta gularis* were at Lake Nakuru on 13 November and ten **African Openbill Storks** *Anastomus lamelligerus* at Lake Naivasha on 24 January. A **Common Teal** *Anas crecca* was found at Limuru, near Nairobi, on 12 December, with another at Thika Sewage Ponds, on 18 January. The count of *c.*200 **Maccoa Ducks** *Oxyura maccoa* at Limuru on 12 December is exceptional today in Kenya.

A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was seen near Shimoni, south coast, on 1 April. In Nairobi National Park (=NP), **Eurasian Griffon Vultures** *Gyps fulvus* were recorded on 7 December (one; *CJ*) and 25 January (two; *ML & US*); this species has been reported not infrequently from this site since its first discovery about three years ago. Other noteworthy raptors included a **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* at Sabaki River mouth on 1 February (uncommon on the coast), a rare dark-morph **Eurasian Marsh Harrier** *C. aeruginosus* at Lake Naivasha on 9 January, a **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* near Lokochokio on 29 January, a **Western Banded Snake Eagle** *C. cinerascens* at Lake Bogoria on 24 October (normally has a more western distribution), a **Grasshopper Buzzard** *Butastur rufipennis* near Lake Elementaita on 25 January (uncommon in the Rift Valley), a **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* near El Molo Island, Lake Turkana, on 30 December, three **Lesser Spotted Eagles** *Aquila pomarina* in Nairobi NP on 2 November, a **Greater Spotted Eagle** *A. clanga* at Lake Nakuru NP on 8 November and two on 25 January, a flock of 30–40 **Steppe Eagles** *A. nipalensis* at Rongai on 15 March, an immature **Imperial Eagle** *A. heliaca* in Nairobi NP on 31 October and an adult in Nakuru NP in late November, two **Booted Eagles** *Hieraaetus pennatus* at Marsabit Lodge on 27 December,

and a pair of **Barbary Falcons** *Falco pelegrinoides* near Lodwar on 28 January.

At Mwea National Reserve, the sighting of *c.*15 **Crested Guineafowl** *Guttera pucherani* was a new record for that atlas square. A pair of **Buff-spotted Flufftails** *Sarothrura elegans* was found at Mountain Lodge, Mt Kenya; known as a resident of western Kenya forests, it has only sporadically been reported from elsewhere. Gongoni, just north of Sabaki, held two **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* on 1 February—it is very unusual to see more than one individual—and the one-legged bird at Mida Creek, first noted there in May 2003, was still present. The sighting of a **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus* in Nairobi NP on 2 November is very unusual. A large concentration of *c.*300 **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* was observed in Amboseli in November. That of *c.*1,000 **Madagascar Pratincoles** *G. ocularis* at Sabaki River mouth on 6 April was the first record of large numbers in 2004. A **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* at Lake Chemchem, near Malindi, is the first reported from this area in five years. Two **Lesser** *C. mongolus* and one **Greater Sand Plover** *C. leschenaultii* were at Lake Nakuru in late November, with another **Greater** there on 20 January; these species are recorded only infrequently inland. On 1 February, seven **Caspian Plovers** *C. asiaticus* and 95 **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* were at Sabaki River mouth. A **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* and a **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* at Lake Chemchem, Malindi, on 1 February, were the first coastal records in several years. Single **Common Redshanks** *T. totanus* were found at Mogotio, near Baringo, on 20 January, and at Mida Creek, on 4 February (*CJ*). An immature **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* at Limuru Ponds, west of Nairobi, seen at close range for over one hour on 25 January, would be the second for East Africa if accepted (*ML & US*). **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were observed off Shimoni on 16 October (six) and 28–29 November (a small flock). The count of 24 **Black-headed Gulls** *Larus ridibundus* on Lake Chemchem, Malindi, on 31 January, was one of the highest for this species on the coast. An adult **Slender-billed Gull** *L. genei* at Lake Naivasha on 14 December was the first inland for some time. A **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* was near Kisumu, Lake Victoria, on 8 December. On 15 February, an estimated 25,000 **Saunders's Terns** *S. saundersi* were roosting at Sabaki River mouth—a very significant number. A pair of **African Orange-bellied Parrots** *Poicephalus rufiventris* along the Amboseli–Namanga road is a very western record. Numerous **Asian Lesser Cuckoos** *Cuculus poliocephalus* were in Arabuko-Sokoke Forest on 7 April. Up to 60 **Forbes-Watson's Swifts** *Apus berliozi* flew over Shimoni on 2 April.

A **Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* claimed from Solio plains would be the third for East Africa if accepted. At Sabaki River mouth, 3–4 **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* were seen on 1 February, with a **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*, rare on the coast, also there on 10 November. **Yellow-bellied Greenbul** *Chlorocichla flaviventris* and **Eastern Nicator** *Nicator gularis* were unexpected species in the foothills of the Chyulus on 29 March. An **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum* was found along Magadi road on 9 January; there are few wintering records for this species in Kenya. An **Icterine Warbler** *H. icterina* was singing in Nairobi NP on 11 April. A **Black-backed Cisticola** *Cisticola eximius* in the Sabaringo Valley, Masai Mara, is the second record at this location; this species was thought to have disappeared from Kenya until rediscovered in the west *c.*5 years ago. A few **Green-capped Eremomelas** *Eremomela scotops* were at Ruiru, Nairobi, on 28 March. A pair of **Grey-headed Batises** *Batis orientalis*, claimed near Lodwar on 28 January, would be the first confirmed record for Kenya if accepted. A **Black-fronted Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus nigrifrons* was observed in the Chyulu Hills on 28 March. Four **Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weavers** *Plocepasser superciliosus* were claimed from Lake Bogoria on 19 January; this would constitute a significant range extension and remains to be confirmed. A male **Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah** *Vidua obtusa* in full breeding plumage along the main Nairobi–Nyeri road, 5–6 km south of Sagana, represents the first confirmed record for this species since 1947 (*CJ*).

Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah
Vidua obtusa
by Mark Andrews

Madeira

Records in September 2003–April 2004 include the following. A **Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* flew into the hotel room of the observer at Caniço di Baixo, at 03.00 hrs on 27 September. Four **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were at Tanque, Porto Santo, on 2 November. A **Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides* was at Porto Santo on 24 September. A **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* was at Machico on 17 February, a **Eurasian Dotterel** *C. morinellus* at Paúl da Serra on 20 September and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* at Porto Santo on 24 September. The fourth **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* for

Madeira was at Machico on 9–10 January. A juvenile **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* was also there on 1 November, and is apparently also a fourth record for the archipelago. A first-winter **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* was in Funchal harbour on 2–8 December at least, and an **American Herring Gull** *L. argentatus smithsonianus* at Machico on 18 September. An exceptional number of **Red-rumped Swallows** *Hirundo daurica* was seen on 16 April: ten at Ribeira de São João and seven at Ponta de São Lourenço. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* was in Funchal Botanical Gardens on 28 November. On 15 March, 15 **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis* were reported from Pico do Arero (GO; per *Dutch Birding* 26: 61–67, 207 and *Birding World* 16: 461, 495; 17: 151).

Mali

On 7 December 2003, an **Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia hortensis* and an albino **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* were seen in the Sokolo area (14°44'N 06°00'W); the albino was almost entirely dirty white, with a grey wash on the mask, wings and tail, where the normal adult, of which several wintered in the area, is black (*MCr*).

Noteworthy records from the north, from February 2004, some of which represent slight range extensions compared to the maps in *Birds of Western Africa* (Borrow & Demey 2001), include a **Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* south of Tombouctou on 20th, a **Lesser Moorhen** *Gallinula angulata* also in the Tombouctou area on 19th, 350 **Spotted Sandgrouse** *Pterocles senegallus* in the Gao area on 16th, two **African Palm Swifts** *Cypsiurus parvus* in Gao town on 18th, a female **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* at Gao on 17th (apparently the first record for Mali), six **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers** *Buphagus africanus* in the Hombori area on 18th, and six **Yellow-crowned Bishops** *Euplectes afer* along the Niger River at Gao on 18th (*CB & GT*).

Mauritania

March 2004 records include the following. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* was found on the beach between Nouakchott and Nouâmghar on 22nd. In Banc d'Arguin, the **Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus vetula* (Cape Gull) was seen again with its **Yellow-legged Gull** *L. michahellis* partner on Zira and at Iwik on 23rd–24th (*HD & KD*); it was also observed (and photographed) on 24 November 2003 (*DM*) and may be the same individual that was first seen in 1997 and 1998. Up to 12 **Grey-headed Gulls** *L. cirrocephalus* were at Iwik, Banc d'Arguin, on 23rd and seven at Cansado on 25th. At Cap Blanc, 800–1,000 **Caspian Terns** *Sterna caspia* and *c.*500 **Royal Terns** *S. maxima* were counted on 26th. **Eurasian Collared Doves** *Streptopelia decaocto* and **Laughing Doves** *S. senegalensis* were common at Cansado on 25–26th; the occurrence of the former has yet to be documented for the country. About 20 **Plain Swifts** *Apus unicolor* were flying over Nouakchott on 29th. Three **Dunn's Larks** *Eremalauda dunni* were singing and one pair was feeding a chick *c.*125 km north of Iwik en route to Nouadhibou, on 25–27th. A **Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* was seen at Cap Timirist, Banc d'Arguin, on 29th and a male **Sudan Golden Sparrow** *Passer luteus* was found holding territory at Cansado on 25–26th (*HD & KD*).

Morocco

Records from October–December 2003 include the following. At Dakhla, a dark-morph **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* was seen on 7 December. Five **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* were at Oued Massa on 10 December (per *Birding World* 16: 495). At least four **Tawny Eagles** *Aquila rapax* were between Goulimine and Tan Tan on 26 October, with another on 31 October (*PB*). A **Golden Eagle** *A. chrysaetos* was 3 km south of Goulimine on 9 December (per *Birding World* 16: 495). Single **Barbary Falcons** *Falco pelegrinoides* were observed at Mirleft, Massa, Tata and Lemseied in late October (*PB*), with another at Tamri on 3 January 2003 (*AR & EP*). A **Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus*, 30 **Royal Terns** *Sterna maxima* and a **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* were seen at Dakhla on 7 December. Six **Orphean Warblers** *Sylvia hortensis* were at Dawra on 27 October (*PB*), with a late one at Oued Massa on 10 December (per *Birding World* 16: 495).

In January–April 2004, the following records were made. An immature **Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer*, 2 km south of Cap Rhir on 11 January, was the fourth for Morocco (*HD*); possibly the same bird was seen off Aghroud, Agadir, on 2 April, constituting the first spring record (per *Dutch Birding* 26: 195–207). Two **Great Egrets** *Egretta alba* and a **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* (rare in winter) were at Ouarzazate Lake on 6 January (*HD*). In the colony of **Northern Bald Ibises** *Geronticus eremita* at Tamri, up to 49 possible nests were counted in March, with a maximum of 197 individuals present in the area. The entire Moroccan population now stands at 368 individuals, all in the Agadir region (*HD*; per *Dutch Birding* 26: 195–207). At Dayet Merzouga, 190 **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* and 50 **Marbled Ducks**

Rufous Scrub Robin
Cercotrichas galactotes
by Mark Andrews

Marmaronetta angustirostris were counted on 14 April (per *Birding World* 17: 151). A female **Cape Shoveler** *Anas smithii*, the second record for Morocco, was at Oued Massa from 25 February until at least 6 March; the previous record was of a pair at Oued Souss, on 26 April 1978; pending further evidence these birds are regarded as escapes (per *Dutch Birding* 26: 128–138). An adult female **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* claimed from Lake Afenourir, 30 km from Azrou, Middle Atlas, on 6 April, would represent a new species for Morocco if accepted; it was in the company of an adult male **Ring-necked Duck** *A. collaris* (*VS*). In the Anti-Atlas, a **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was reportedly present at a rainwater pool along Tagdilt track, east of Boumalne de Dadès, from 25 February until 4 March (per *Dutch Birding* 26: 195–207). At Oued Massa beach, a **Grey-headed Gull** was noted in late February (per *Dutch Birding* 26: 128–138). About 500 **Audouin's Gulls** *Larus audouinii* were at Aghroud on 2 November (*PB*) and between Taghazoute and Tamri on 11 January (*HD*). The fifth **Iceland Gull** *L. glaucoides* for Morocco was a third-winter at Aghroud on 11 January. At Massa, a **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* and 2–3 **Eurasian Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* were seen on 12 January; there are few records of either species in winter. Also there that day was the first **Rufous Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* in winter (*HD*). The number of **Desert Sparrows** *Passer simplex* in the Merzouga area, Tafilalt, seems to be decreasing, as only four individuals were regularly found in the area around Café Yasmina; in addition, a nesting pair was discovered in an old palm tree close to Merzouga village (per *Dutch Birding* 26: 195–207).

Namibia

Records made in July 2003–April 2004 include the following. A **Streaky-breasted Flufftail** *Sarothrura boehmi* was photographed north of Etosha in January (*AR*). A **Striped Crake** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* was found in a flooded vlei at Katima in April (*MB*). **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* were reported from Swakopmund Salt Works on 3 July (*AR*) and from Walvis Bay in March–April (*PJ*); an adult has been at the latter site for the last four years at least (per *TH*). Walvis Bay also held a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* on 15 March and two **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* on 23 March (*KW*). Also there were two breeding-plumaged adult females and an adult male **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* on 3 July; this species is regular at this site in the austral summer (with up to 28 in 2003–2004; *KW*) but is unusual in July (*AR*). Still at Walvis Bay, a **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica*, which stayed from 23 March until 2 May, appears to be the first for Namibia (*PH* et al.). An **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum*, observed at length at the entrance to Mahango Game Reserve on 10 November, represents one of very few records in Namibia (*AR & RT*). At the same location, **Northern Grey-headed Sparrows** *Passer griseus* were recorded on 12 July and 10 November; this seems to be a westward range extension for the species (*AR*).

Niger

Three new species to Niger were reported in 2003: **Red-chested Cuckoo** *Cuculus solitarius*, heard 43 km west of Diffa on 25 September (*MCR*), **Grassland Pipit** *Anthus cinnamomeus*, seen 44 km north-east of Tahoua on 25 July (*APT*) and **Buff-bellied Warbler** *Phyllolais pulchella*, found 39 km west of Diffa on 25 September (*KDC*). Other noteworthy sightings from the Diffa area in September 2003 include a **Clapperton's Francolin** *Francolinus clappertoni* on 23rd (*MCR*), a **Little Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvaticus* on 24th (*MCR*) with another on 26th (*KDC*), and a **Little Grey Woodpecker** *Dendropicos elachus* on 23rd (*KDC*).

A pair of **African Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla aguimp* (on the bank of the Niger River) and two **Black-eared Wheatears** *Oenanthe hispanica* were observed at Niamey on 24 January 2004; although these species are not uncommon in the area, documented sightings are scarce (*MCr*). Two **Isabelline Shrikes** *Lanius isabellinus*, seen on 19 September 2003 near Tanout, appear to represent the second record for Niger (*MCR*).

Nigeria

At Ngel Nyaki, the forest on the Mambilla Plateau near Gembu, noteworthy species observed in December 2003 include **Naked-faced** *Gymnobucco calvus* and **Yellow-billed Barbet** *Trachylaemus purpuratus* (both at the edge of their range), **Wahlberg's Honeybird** *Prodotiscus regulus* (a juvenile seen several times on two consecutive days; apparently only the fifth record in Nigeria, at a new site), **Slender-billed Greenbul** *Andropadus gracilirostris*, **Pink-footed Puffback** *Dryoscopus angolensis*, **Dark-backed Weaver** *Ploceus bicolor*, **Pale-fronted Negrofinch** *Nigrita luteifrons* (one seen briefly) and **Western Bluebill** *Spermophaga haematina* (*TD*).

São Tomé & Príncipe

Two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** *Larus fuscus* were sitting on a buoy in the Baia de Ana Chaves, São Tomé city, on 20 November 2003. A probable **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* arrived and departed with a ship on 23 November (*AG*).

Senegal

Records from the period November 2003–January 2004 include the following. Fifteen **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were counted in Djoudj National Park (=NP) on 28 December; the species winters in the park in October–March. On 25 January one was observed with a metallic ring on the left leg and a white ring with a letter 'S' on the right (*IND*). Two were seen in the Ndiaël Faunal Reserve on 4 December, and a flock of 29 near Kaolack on 12 December. An exceptionally large flock of at least 550 **White Storks** *C. ciconia* was at a seasonal lake at Ndiaël on 4 December. A **Marabou Stork** *Leptoptilos cru-*

meniferus was at N'Dayane, south of Dakar, on 8 December (*RC*). **Eurasian Griffon Vultures** *Gyps fulvus* were reported from near Dakar (one, 3 December; *RC*), near Kaolack (singles, 14 and 16 December; *RC*), and the Louga area (eight at various roadside casualties, 25 January, and one, 30 January; *NB*). An immature **Bonelli's Eagle** *Hieraaetus fasciatus* was in the Bango area, near St Louis, on 26 January; this Palearctic migrant appears to winter in the area in small numbers (*NB*). **Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio*, observed on 2 November at the Technopole wetland, Dakar, appears to be resident in the area (*MC*). On 7 December a **Denham's Bustard** *Neotis denhami* was seen near Djoudj NP. A **Shining Blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadribrachys* was on a small stream in Niokolo Koba NP on 14–15 December (*RC*).

A **Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis* was found in the Bango area, St Louis, on 26 January; this species was first recorded in northern Senegal in 1989 and the birds were ascribed to the subspecies *asbenaicus* although the measurements were somewhat large. The very greyish coloration of the bird at Bango does not match this form—an undescribed race? A group of four **Fulvous Babblers** *Turdoides fulvus* were nest building in the Richard Toll area on 28 January; there are few records for northern Senegal and this may constitute the first confirmed breeding record. A male **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* was seen in Djoudj NP on 29 January (*NB*).

Bimaculated Lark
Melanocorypha bimaculata
by Mark Andrews

Seychelles

Records accepted as firsts for the country by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) include a **Bimaculated Lark** *Melanocorypha bimaculata* at Bird Island on 22–27 November 2003 (possibly also the first genuine vagrant for the Southern Hemisphere) and an adult **Grey-headed Kingfisher** *Halcyon leucocephala* that stayed at Denis Island from 30 December 2003 until 16 February 2004 (constituting the most easterly record for this species).

Other records from 2003 and early 2004 accepted by SBRC include two adult **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* at St François lagoon on 11 January 2003 (fifth record for Seychelles), an adult **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* at Cousine Island on 29 October 2003 (fourth record), an adult female **Cinnamon Bittern** *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus* at Aride Island on 23 January 2004 (second record), an **Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii* at Denis Island, on 26 January–26 February 2004 (fourth record), a non-breeding adult **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* at Beau Vallon, Mahé, on 3–6 December 2003 (second record), an **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* at Denis Island from 13 July 2003 until 4 February 2004 (second record), a **Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* at Bird Island on 21 November 2003 (accepted as the third for Seychelles with the caveat that other possible escaped quail species could not be eliminated), a **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* at Alphonse Island on 25 October 2003 and at Bird Island from mid-October 2003 until 10 May 2004 (third and fourth records; Fig. 1), a **Little Curlew** *Numenius minutus* at Seybrew mudflats, Mahé, on 21–22 October 2003 (second record), a **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* at Alphonse Island on 24–28 December 2003 (fifth record; Fig. 2), a **European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* at Denis Island on 5–7 November 2003 (second record; Fig. 3), and a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* at Frégate Island in mid-December 2003 (fourth record).

Significant records in October 2003–February 2004 received by SBRC include two **Northern Pintails** *Anas acuta* at a pool near Praslin airport on 26 November, a **Northern Shoveler** *A. clypeata* at Providence mudflats, Mahé, on 29 November, a **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* at Aride Island on 6 November, a **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* at Aride Island on 21–27 November, a **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* at the Inter-Island Quay, Victoria, Mahé, on 29 November, and another at Seybrew mudflats, Mahé, on 17 February, a **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* at Bird Island on 23–27 November (Fig. 4), an **Asian Lesser Cuckoo** *Cuculus poliocephalus* at Alphonse Island on 24 December and one at Aride on 29 December, a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* at La Passe, Silhouette, on 11–17 October, a **White Wagtail** *M. alba* at l'Allée, Aride Island, on 18–23 November, a first-winter **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* at Aride Island on 29 October–3 November and a male at Denis Island on 1 January–13 February 2004, and a first-winter **European Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* at Bird Island on 22 November.

The exceptional number of **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* of late 2002, a species unrecorded in Seychelles prior to 1995 (see *Bull ABC* 10: 138), was repeated in late 2003. Reports include an adult female at Praslin Airport on 4 December, up to ten at Bird Island on 20–28 November (mainly females or first-winters, with at least one second-year male), an adult female at La Passe, Silhouette, on 18 December, an immature at Alphonse Island from 25 December until 8 February 2004 (Fig. 5), and a male at Alphonse Island on 25 December (*AS*).

Little Brown Bustard
Eupodotis humilis
by Mark Andrews

Somalia

The following records were made in December 2003 in Somaliland (northern Somalia), en route from Hargeysa to Ceerigaabo, and also in the Daalo area. A **Steppe Buzzard** *Buteo buteo vulpinus* was seen at 10°45'N 47°18'E on 26th; this is apparently only the second record for Somalia (see Ash & Miskell 1998, *Birds of Somalia*). **Augur Buzzard** *Buteo augur archeri* was observed several times on the escarpment at 10°47'N 47°17'E on 26th (possibly the same individual). A male **Little Brown Bustard** *Eupodotis humilis* was calling (a high-pitched rattle *we-we-we* given with head thrown backwards) at dusk at 09°24'N 46°46'E on 25th, with a female close by. **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse** *Pterocles lichtensteinii* was noted at 09°41'N 44°22'E on 25th, and the endemic **Somali Pigeon** *Columba oliviae* at 10°48'N 47°19'E the next day. **European Scops Owl** *Otus scops* was heard at 10°57'N 47°13'E on 26th; there is only one previous record, from 1919. The following lark species were seen on 25th: **Rufous-naped Lark** *Mirafra africana sharpei* at 09°10'N 46°00'E, the endemic **Somali Lark** *Mirafra somalica* at 09°19'N 46°38'E and **Fawn-coloured Lark** *Mirafra africanoides alopex* at 09°55'N 45°11'E. A probable **Archer's Lark** *Heteromirafra archeri*, a rare and very localised endemic, which has not been seen since 1955, was found at 09°39'N 43°26'E on 29th; unfortunately the diagnostic pale median crown stripe was not noted. **Brown-tailed Rock Chat** *Cercomela scotocerca* was observed at 09°58'N 45°09'E and **Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* at 09°57'N 44°41'E on 25th. The very local endemic **Warsangli Linnet** *Carduelis johannis* was at 10°45'N 47°18'E on 26th and **Golden-winged Grosbeak** *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* at 10°47'N 47°18'E the next day (*GM*).

South Africa

The following records were reported in December 2003–June 2004, unless indicated otherwise. A **Buller's Albatross** *Thalassarche* (*Diomedea*) *bulleri* was videotaped on a Cape pelagic trip on 15 February (*IS*). A **Northern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes halli* was seen off Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 21 June 2003; a rarity for the province (*AR, ASu, DH* et al.). An **Atlantic** (Schlegel's) **Petrel** *Pterodroma incerta* was seen passing Cape Point, Western Cape, on 29 May (*BR* per *TH*). A **Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda* was seen again on 20 January, between Vermont and Onrus River, Western Cape (*MF*); it was last seen there on 25 January (*TH*). What may have been the same individual was seen at De Hoop Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 4 February (*CL*). In KwaZulu-Natal, a female **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* was at Zinkwazi on 19 January (*KA*) and a female **Lesser Frigatebird** *F. ariel* at St Lucia on 18 May (*FV*). A **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* was near Rondevlei Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 3–4 April (*AK, MT*). A **Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea* was still present at Olifants River mouth, north of Lambert's Bay, Western Cape, during the whole period (per *SARareBirdAlert*). A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* stayed at Kluitjieskraal forestry station (details on the location unknown) for two weeks in January (*MD*), with another between Caledon and Napier, Western Cape, on 3 February (*CL*), and a third at the N1/R46 junction east of Touws River, Western Cape, on 21 June (per *CC*). A group of *c.*200 **White Storks** *C. ciconia*, mostly immatures, soared low above Rondevlei Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 1 January (*CC*).

An **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* was at Gamtoos River mouth, Eastern Cape, on 22 December (*DB*) and two were in West Coast National Park (=NP), Western Cape, on 7 February (*AH*). **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were reported from Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 28 December (one; *ASu*), Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Western Cape, on 3 January (one; *CC* et al.), Fernwood Estate, Cape Peninsula, Western Cape, on 11 January (one; *OS*) and 20–22 January (two; *CC*), Kirstenbosch Craft Market, Western Cape, on 25 January (one; *KS*), Cecelia Forest, Cape Peninsula, Western Cape, on 31 January (two; *MB*), and Kirstenbosch, Western Cape, on 29 February (one; *BV*). A pair of **Bat Hawks** *Macheiramphus alcinus* at the old nesting site near Rooikoppies Tea Estate, close to Debengeni Falls, Magoebaskloof, Limpopo, gave excellent views on 1 February (*CV*). A male **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* was seen north of Perdekop, Mpumalanga, on 11 December (*AR*), and a **Eurasian Marsh Harrier** *C. aeruginosus* at Marievale, Gauteng, on 16 December (*BG*). A dark-morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* was at Rondevlei, Western Cape, on 30 December (*CC*), and a pale morph at Fernwood Estate on 11 January (*OS*). An **African Hobby** *Falco cuvierii* was at Albasini Dam, east of Makhado, Limpopo, on 1 February (*CV*); apparently a pair has been present in the area since November 2003 (per *AM*). An adult **Eleonora's Falcon** *F. eleonorae* was observed in the Umfolozi Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 9 January (*DMc*).

On 11 April, a male **Blue Quail** *Coturnix* (*chinensis*) *adansonii* was seen in the north of Kruger NP; this is the first record for the park and only the third for the old Transvaal

province, the two previous records being from 1906 and 1910, while the last record from South Africa was of a dead bird in Durban in December 1973 (*HR*). The following crakes were reported: a **Corncrake** *Crex crex* at Middelpunt, Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga, on 20 December (*AR, DC, MDr* et al.) and another at Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 21 January (*PW*), a **White-winged Flufftail** *Sarothrura ayresi* at Middelpunt, Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga, in mid-December (*DC, MDr* et al.), a **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* at Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 25 January (*NP, AT*), and a **Striped Crake** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* at Kgomo-Kgomo, north of Pretoria, Gauteng, on 24–25 April (*EM* et al.), with another at Vogelfontein, Nylsvley, Limpopo, on 8–22 May (*DC, RG, CV* et al.).

Eurasian Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* were reported from Muizenberg, Western Cape, on 14 December (one; per *JC*), Lake St Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, on 19 December (one, apparently there for some time; *AR, JR, DH* et al.), Eland's Bay, Western Cape, on 14 December–6 January (one; *GB, JG, TH,* et al.), and Gamtoos River mouth, Eastern Cape, on 22 December–9 May (two; *DB* et al.), with one still present on 9 June (*AT*). **Lesser Sand Plovers** *Charadrius mongolus* were present at Gamtoos River mouth, Eastern Cape, on 1 January (two; *MB*) and at Kromme Rivier, Eastern Cape, on 9 June (one; *AT*), whilst **Greater Sand Plovers** *C. leschenaultii* were at Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 28 December (one; *ASu*), at Gamtoos River mouth on 1 January (one; *MB*), and at De Mond Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 3 February (one; *CL*). Up to 20 **Caspian Plovers** *C. asiaticus* were present at Spitskop Dam, near Warrenton, Northern Cape, in December–January (*AT* et al.). A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* was at Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, from late December until early March (*ASu* et al.); singles were also at De Mond Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 2–21 March (*JCu, TH* et al.) and at Uilenkraals River mouth, Western Cape, on 18 April (*AO*). A leucistic **Grey Plover** *P. squatarola* was at West Coast NP, Western Cape, on 17 April (*BV*).

The **Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* from Seeberg hide in West Coast NP, Western Cape, was present from 31 November to late December (per *capebirdnet*); this is the bird's fourth season at exactly the same site, having first been recorded in December 2000 (see *Bull ABC* 10: 120–121). **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* were found near Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 18 December (two; *MB*), at Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, in December–January (up to four; *AR, JR, DH* et al.), and at Ladysmith sewage works, KwaZulu-Natal, on 7 January (one; *DH*). A **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* was at West Coast NP, Western Cape, on 29–31 December (*MM* et al.); three stayed at Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, from late December until early March (*ASu, JW* et al.). Two **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* were at Spitskop Dam, near Warrenton, Northern Cape, on 21 December, with four there on 15–23 January (*AT* et al.); one was at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 11–14 May (*RM*). Two **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus*, first observed on 14 December in West Coast NP, Western Cape, were last reported on 1 March (*TG, JG, PC, JCu* et al.); one was also at Velddrif, Western Cape, on 19–28 March (*PHo, TH, JG* et al.). **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinereus* were present at Gamtoos River mouth, Eastern Cape, on 22 December (one; *DB*) and 1 January (*c.*40; *MB*), De Mond Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 3 February (one; *CL*), and West Coast NP, Western Cape, on 7 February (one; *AH*) and 17 June (16; *TH*). Up to five **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* at Velddrif, Western Cape, first seen on 25 November, were last reported on 19 March (*JC, PC, JCu* et al.); four were also noted at Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape, on 15 February (*PN*). A **Red Phalarope** *P. fulicarius* was at Spitskop Dam, Northern Cape, on 14 February (*GS*).

Single **Franklin's Gulls** *Larus pipixcan* were reported from Umgeni River mouth, KwaZulu-Natal, on 9–10 January (*AKr*), Durban Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 5 April (*DA*), and Port Elisabeth, Eastern Cape, on 26 April–3 May (*PW*). A **Black-headed Gull** *L. ridibundus* in breeding plumage stayed at Krugersdrift Dam, near Bloemfontein, Free State, from 16 December until 5 January at least (*RN* et al.); a non-breeding individual was reported from Kleinriviersvlei (details on the location unknown), on 15 February (*MF*). A juvenile **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus*, first seen on 21 December at Spitskop Dam, near Warrenton, Northern Cape, was last reported on 23 January (*AT* et al.). A wholly white **Kelp Gull** *L. dominicanus* was in a flock of roosting gulls at Strandfontein sewage works, Western Cape, on 15 February (*MMa*). Tern records include a **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* at Cape Recife, Eastern Cape, from 12 April until 9 June (*AT*), a **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* at Durban Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 5 April (*DA*), and a **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* at Velddrif, Western Cape, from mid-December to early January (*JC, PC* et al.), with another at Rocher Pan on 18 December (*JCu* et al.).

The sixth **White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis* for southern Africa was at Pearly Beach, near Hermanus, Western Cape, on 28–29 April (*VB*). Near Wellington, Western Cape, a **Southern Ground Hornbill** *Bucorvus leadbeateri* was seen on 23 December (*DV* per *BV*). A **Wahlberg's Honeybird** (Sharp-billed Honeyguide) *Prodotiscus regulus* was found at Tokai Plantation, Cape Peninsula, Western Cape, on 20 December (*CC*), and another at Kirstenbosch, Western Cape, on 29 February (*BV*).

A **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*, first found at Magoebaskloof, Limpopo, in late December, was last

seen there on 28 February (*AW, JGl* et al.). A **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* stayed for three weeks in February in a garden at the Vaal River, *c.*6 km from Sasolburg, Free State; this is possibly the southernmost record for the species and probably the first for Free State (*JB*). A **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* was at Wilderness NP, Western Cape, on 6 March; there have been a number of records from the Garden Route in recent years (*JG*). **River Warblers** *Locustella fluviatilis* were recorded at Vaalkop Dam Nature Reserve, North-west Province, on 23 March (two; *EM*), Polokwane Nature Reserve, Limpopo, on 1 April (one; *DE*) and Zaagkuilsdrift road, north of Pretoria, Gauteng, on 3 April (one; *AT*). A female **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* was at Marloth Nature Reserve, north of Swellendam, Western Cape, on 30 November 2003 (*JE* per *CC*). Two **Grey Sunbirds** *Cyanomitra veroxii* near Robberg, in Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, were seen on 24–29 December at least (*MB, CD*); apparently an influx took place into the Garden Route area, with birds reported from Wilderness, Nature's Valley and Knysna (*CC*). An **Olive Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus olivaceus* was at Kirstenbosch, Western Cape, on 27 February (*PH*).

Tanzania

Records in November 2003–March 2004 include the following. A **Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* was found in the Ngorongoro Crater in February; despite regular large numbers on Lake Lagarja there are very few records from this site. Three **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were seen in Tarangire National Park (=NP) in February; there has been an increase in sightings during the past decade, which mirrors a population increase in eastern Europe. A flock of 15 **Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* stayed in the Ngorongoro Crater in February; there are very few records of this Palearctic species in Tanzania. Only eight **Maccoa Ducks** *Oxyura maccoa* were counted on the Momella lakes in February; this species appears to be heading for local extinction within the next few years (*TS* per *NBa*). An immature **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Aviceda cuculoides* was observed at Ndarakwai Ranch, West Kilimanjaro, on 21 February, and an adult **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* in Arusha NP on 20 February (*PR*). A **Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter rufiventris* was in Arusha NP in February; there are very few records from this well-watched site where this species is presumably resident. Two **Lesser Spotted Eagles** *Aquila pomarina* seen in the Serengeti in February is a significant record; this species is not common in the west (*TS* per *NBa*). An adult female **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was noted at Ndarakwai Ranch, West Kilimanjaro, on 22 February (*PR*); there are few records of this species in Tanzania. Two pale, streaky quails, that were believed to be **Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*, were flushed around Manta Reef Lodge, Pemba, on 21 November (*NB*). A **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* was observed in the north in February; Tanzania is the southern limit of the species' wintering range and sightings from Manyara and Tarangire are most welcome (*TS* per *NBa*). Two **White-fronted Plovers** *C. marginatus* at Ifakara, Kilombero floodplain, on 17 November, constitute the first inland record (*NB*). Ten **Spur-winged Lapwings** *Vanellus spinosus* were counted at Manyara in February; this is the first time in many years that a count from this site has reached double figures and this record, together with recent ones from Burungi, indicate that the population continues to grow (*TS* per *NBa*). A **Spur-winged Lapwing** at Ifakara, Kilombero floodplain, on 17 November, represents the first record for this site (*NB*). Single **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were reported from Seronera and Manyara in February; these are the southern limits of the wintering range of this Palearctic wader (*TS* per *NBa*).

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*
by Mark Andrews

A **Black-billed Barbet** *Lybius guifsobalito* seen in the Grumeti strip, in western Serengeti NP, on 23 February, constitutes the first record for the park (*PR*). Also in Grumeti, **Yellow-whiskered Greenbul** *Andropadus latirostris* was seen in February; this is only the second record of this presumed resident here (*TS* per *NBa*). A (possible breeding?) pair of **Golden-winged Sunbirds** *Nectarinia reichenowi* was seen in the South Pare Mountains on 28 November. A subadult male or adult female **Masked Shrike** *Lanius nubicus* was found in the garden of Manta Reef Lodge, Pemba, on 20 November; this is apparently the first record for Tanzania of this species, which normally regularly winters as far south as Baringo, Kenya. Several male **Fire-fronted Bishops** *Euplectes diadematus* amongst an unspecified number of non-breeding/female *Euplectes* were seen at Nyumba ya Mungu reservoir, near Moshi, on 29 November. At least 40 **Cuckoo Finches** *Anomalospiza imberbis* were coming to drink at Ifakara on 17 November. A **Stripe-breasted Seedeater** *Serinus reichardi* was seen above Geiro, Ukaguru Mountains, on 8 November (*NB*).

Tunisia

Records from December 2003 include a pair of **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* near Douz on 17th and another west of Kebili the following day (*AH*). South of Kairouan, *c.*400 **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* and *c.*400 **White-**

headed Ducks *Oxyura leucocephala* were counted on 7th; a slightly higher number of **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* was also present here and at least 280 were at Douz on 28th (per *Dutch Birding* 26: 56 and *Birding World* 17: 11).

Uganda

Records in January–February and August 2003 include the following. A pair of **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* was present at the crater lake below Ndali Lodge, near Kibale, on 28 January; this species is rarely recorded in Uganda. Also rarely seen is **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca*, of which two were in Queen Elizabeth National Park (=NP) on 30 January. A **Western Reef Egret** *Egretta gularis* was on the Kazinga Channel, Queen Elizabeth NP on 19 August. A **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana*, another rare Palaearctic migrant to Uganda, was seen in a wetland near Hoima on 27 January. An **African Green Broadbill** *Pseudocalyptomena graueri* was observed at its nest near Mubwindi Swamp, Bwindi Impenetrable NP, on 4 February. A pair of **Southern Black Flycatchers** *Melaenornis pammelaina* with a juvenile was observed in Lake Mburo NP on 6 February, at the same place where a pair was observed on 25 July 2002; these sightings apparently represent the first records in Uganda. The long-staying **Yellow-footed Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sethsmithi* at Buhoma, Bwindi Impenetrable NP, was still present in August; this bird represents the only record for the park and the only Ugandan record away from Budongo Forest. A pair of **Dusky Twinspots** *Euschistospiza cinereovinacea* was seen at the Sebitoli section of Kibale NP on 28 January; this is a new park record and a range extension for the species (*AR*).

On 26 February 2004, a **Congo Serpent Eagle** *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* was observed at The Neck, Bwindi Impenetrable NP; this constitutes the fourth sighting for Uganda (*ATw*).

Zambia

Three new species for South Luangwa National Park were recorded at Chunyu Lagoon on 4 December 2003: **Little Rush Warbler** *Bradypterus baboecala*, **Lesser Swamp Warbler** *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* and **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* (*DS & FH*). A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was in the Mfuwe gate area of the park on 22 March 2004 (*MC*).

Zimbabwe

The first **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* for Zimbabwe (and only the fourth for southern Africa) was seen at Hwange National Park from 23 March until 4 May (*CJ0* per *TH*).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Klaus Achtzehn (KA), Dave Allen (DA), George Angehr (GA), Neil Baker (NBa), Clive R. Barlow (CRB), Patrick Bergier (PB), Gielie Bester (GB), Nik Borrow (NB), Chris Bowden (CB), John Bradshaw (JB), Vic Breach (VB), Dave Brown (DB), Mike Buckham (MB), John Carter (JC), Kim Diget Christensen (KDC), Marcell Claassen (MC), Tony Clarke (TC), Deon Coetzee (DC), Philip Coetzee (PC), Callan Cohen (CC), Mary Crickmore (MCr), Richard Cruse (RC), James Currie (JCu), Mariana Delport (MD), Kris De Rouck (KD), Lieuwe Dijksen (LD), Mindy Baha El Din (MBD), Sherif Baha El Din (SBD), Tony Disley (TD), Cliff Dorse (CD), Malcolm Drummond (MDr), Hugues Dufourny (HD), Jon Ekström (JE), Gonçalo Elias (GE), Derek Engelbrecht (DE), Charles & Lara Foley (C & LF), Mike Ford (MF), Erik Forsyth (EF), Angus Gascoigne (AG), Rob Geddes (RG), Arthur Geilvoet (AGe), John Glendinning (JGl), Tertius Gous (TG), John Graham (JG), Bryan Groom (BG), Trevor Hardaker (TH), Andrew Harrop (AH), Andrew Hester (AH), Fil Hide (FH), Phil Hockey (PH), David Hoddinott (DH), Pierre Hofmeyr (PHo), J. Hughes (JH), Colin Jackson (CJ), Flemming Pagh Jensen (FPJ), Courtney Johnson (CJo), Peter Jordi (PJ), Ruud Kampf (RK), Ann Koeslag (AK), Erling Krabbe (EK), Andrew Kruger (AKr), Thomas Kuppel (TK), Marc Languy (ML), Chris Lotz (CL), Etienne Marais (EM), André Marx (AM), Margaret Maciver (MMa), Michael Mason (MM), Duncan McKenzie (DMc), Dominic Mitchell (DM), Richard Montinaro (RM), Giles Mulholland (GM), Idrissa N'Diaye (IND), Peter Nupen (PN), Rick Nuttall (RN), Anton Odendal (AO), Georges Olioso (GO), Eric Pozzo (EP), Naas du Preez (NP), Marcel Christian Rahner (MCR), Howard Rayner (HR), Grant Reed (GR), Adam Riley (AR), Detlef Robel (DR), Peter Roberts (PR), Staffan Rodebrand (SR), Barrie Rose (BR), Jonathan Rossouw (JR), Kev Roy (KR), Otto Schmidt (OS), Valéry Schollaert (VS), Kevin Shaw (KS), Ian Sinclair (IS), Teet Sirotkin (TS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Derek Solomon (DS), Uffe Sørensen (US), Gerhardt Streicher (GS), Andrew Sutherland (ASu), Alf Taylor (AT), Rick Taylor (RT), Anders Peter Tøttrup (APT), Mel Tripp (MT), Glen Tyler (GT), Alfred Twinomujuni (ATw), Colin Valentine (CV), Brian Vanderwalt (BV), Dirk Van Driel (DV), Rae Vernon (RV), Frederic Veyrunes (FV), Keith Wearne (KW), Aard van der Wetering (AW), Phil Whittington (PW) Johnny Wilson (JW) and from Birding World, capebirdnet, Dutch Birding, Sandgrouse, SARareBirdAlert *and* www.zestforbirds.co.za.

Contributions for Recent Reports can be sent to Ron Demey, Van der Heimstraat 52, 2582 SB Den Haag, Netherlands and also by e-mail: rondemey@compuserve.com.

Letter to the Editor

First photograph of a hybrid African x Green-breasted Pitta *Pitta angolensis* ssp. x *P. (angolensis) reichenowi*

The back cover of the last issue of *Bull. ABC* (March 2004) shows, without comment, a photograph of an African Pitta *Pitta angolensis* (presumably subspecies *pulih*) taken by Guus Hak in Cross River National Park, south-east Nigeria; it appears to us to be a hybrid between *P. angolensis* and Green-breasted Pitta *P. (angolensis) reichenowi.*

The yellow-buff breast has a clear olive-green wash from the upper side down to the centre. Moreover, there is a distinct dark patch between the pinkish throat and the buff breast. In Green-breasted Pitta this often appears as a wholly black patch (see Keith *et al.* 1992, Borrow & Demey 2001), and Chapin (1953) referred to it as a 'half-hidden band of black' between the upper breast and throat. Indeed, Chapin used this as a separating character in his key to Green-breasted and African Pittas. In the bird photographed this patch is probably not as dark as in typical Green-breasted Pitta, but the presence of a darkish patch there is an additional feature in support of the hybrid origin of this individual. (Incidentally, the text in Keith *et al.* 1992 mentions a black transverse bar for *both* Green-breasted and African Pittas, but this is in error: it is absent in the latter and is indeed not shown in their plate).

This is the first indication that the influence of Green-breasted Pitta might reach south-east Nigeria. The nearest locality from which a confirmed specimen of *P. (a.) reichenowi* is available is Ambam, some 400 km to the south-east (see map 41 in Louette 1981). Birds with the characters of hybrids between the Green-breasted and African forms are known from several localities in Cameroon: Germain *et al.* (1973) collected no fewer than three hybrids at Nkolngem (30 km north of Yaoundé), and Decoux & Fotso (1988) collected another at Yaoundé itself. Louette (1981) also examined a hybrid from Sakbayeme (south-west of Yaoundé), but contrary to the suggestion by Fry in Keith *et al.* (1992), Louette did not claim that specimens from Bafia and Nkom were hybrids showing features of *reichenowi*, merely that their wing lengths were too great for the Upper Guinea race *P. a. pulih.* South of Cameroon, hybrids are known also from Congo-Brazzaville: the university collection held two hybrids obtained at Brazzaville (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1989), presumably involving *P. a. angolensis.* Thus a hybrid zone extends at least from south-east Nigeria to southern Congo-Brazzaville, i.e. throughout a significant part of the range of *Pitta angolensis sensu stricto* that is closest to that of *P. (angolensis) reichenowi.*

This raises again the question of the conspecificity of *P. angolensis* ssp. and *P. (angolensis) reichenowi* (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993). African Pittas *sensu lato* are unique among pittas in having a wing-noise display, it being made while the bird spreads the wings during a vertical jump. There are several tape-recordings of the resulting *prrrt* noise made by African Pitta. Transcriptions of the display of Green-breasted Pitta from Congo-Kinshasa (Chapin 1953) and Gabon (Brosset in Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991) suggest that the displays of the two are identical, so it is no wonder that these birds can hybridise so easily. The number of hybrids reported in these secretive birds over a large area reinforces our conviction—along with Germain *et al.* (1973), Louette (1981) and Decoux & Fotso (1988)—that *P. (angolensis) angolensis, pulih* and *longipennis* and *P. (angolensis) reichenowi* are indeed conspecific.

We thank Ron Demey for help with a reference not immediately to hand.

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Notes for Contributors

The ABC welcomes original contriburions on all aspects of the birds of Africa, here defined as the area covered by Collar, N.J. and Stuart, S.N. 1985. *Threatened birds of Africa and related islands: the ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book.* Cambridge: International Council for Bird Preservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, eg Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, eg the Trisran da Cunha group, the Azores and the Canaries.

Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent reviewers, where appropriate. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

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Two hard (printed) copies should be sent unless submitting by e-mail (preferred) to the editor's address on the inside front cover. Typewritten manuscripts should be double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, with wide margins all round. All submissions are acknowledged.

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Preferred names

With the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authors are requesred to follow those used in *Birds of Africa* Vols 1–7. The African Bird Club has recently published (www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/checklist.html) a checklist of birds in its region. This is based on *Birds of Africa* but incorporates more recent revisions where appropriate. It includes preferred scienrific, English and French names as well races and alternatives used by publications widely used in Africa. For bird names this list should be used or at least the preferred name used there should be given as an alternarive. For non-*Birds of Africa* species (eg from the Malagasy region) use Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993). Deviation from such works should be noted and the reasons given. The Editorial Team will keep abreast of changes in nomenclature and when an agreed list of African names is available, will consider switching to follow it. Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, the names of places should, if possible, follow those on standard or readily available maps.

Style

Authors are requested to follow conventions used in The *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* and to refer ro a recent issue for guidance. A detailed style guide can be obtained, either electronically or as a hard copy, on request from the Managing Editor.

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The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting the Club in your region, have any queries, or require further information relating to the ABC Representatives scheme please do not hesitate to contact Paul Lascelles, the Country Representatives Coordinator, at the club address or email: reps@africanbirdclub.org.

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